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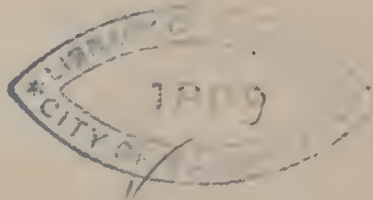
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JESUS

ON

THE HOLY MOUNT.

BY JOSEPH SANDERSON, D. D.



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MEMORANDUM

WE have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard when we were with him in the Holy Mount. 2 PETER 1:16-18.

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MATT. 17:1: "And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart."

MARK 9:2: "And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into a high mountain apart by themselves."

LUKE 9:28: "About an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray."

VERSE 37: "And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met him."

JESUS

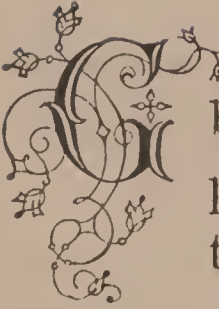
ON

THE HOLY MOUNT.

I.

THE TIME.

“Sun of my soul, thou Saviour dear,
It is not night if thou art near!
Oh, may no earth-born cloud arise,
To hide thee from thy servant’s eyes!”

OD always chooses the most suitable times and seasons for the accomplishment of his purposes. The transfiguration is no exception. It occurred when most needed by the Saviour for the confirmation of his Messiahship and for the encouragement of his human spirit, and when most required by the disciples who were privileged to witness it, even when the hour approached when ignominy

and shame should be poured upon their Master, and when he should die amid the reproaches and scorn of the people.

Nor was the season less appropriate. The transfiguration probably took place in the night, for Luke informs us that the disciples slept, and did not descend the mountain till the next day. Besides, what could form a better surrounding to the glory about to be revealed than the curtain of night, when darkness covered the earth, and the sparkling children of the sky were dancing in their joy? What a befitting time for the manifestation of such surpassing glory as was about to flood that mountain's brow!

Indeed, the night scenes of the Bible are among the most impressive of Holy Writ. God during the night season has frequently manifested himself in kindness to his people, and in wrath to his enemies.

It was amid the darkness upon the plains of Mamre that God, with a smoking furnace and a burning lamp, confirmed his promise of the land of Canaan to Abraham and to his seed, and afterwards called upon him to offer up his only son whom he loved.

The vision of a ladder connecting heaven

and earth, with angels upon it and God above it, was granted to Jacob as he rested for the night at Bethel; and the Angel at the brook Jabbok wrestled with him till the breaking of the day.

It was a night much to be remembered on which God slew the first-born in Egypt, and brought his people forth from the land of bondage. Three hundred chosen men of Israel, under Gideon, armed only with trumpets, pitchers, and lanterns, discomfited by night the hosts of Midian and Amalek; and Babylon's monarch saw his doom written by night upon his palace walls.

The angelic birth-song of the Saviour was heard by the Bethlehem shepherds as they kept watch over their flocks by night; and the parents of that infant Immanuel fled by night with their precious charge to Egypt from the wrath of the Judean king.

The soul of the rich fool was required of him at night; and at midnight the door was shut against the foolish virgins who had not prepared for the bridegroom's coming.

“ At even Jesus sat down with the twelve ” to eat the last Passover and institute the supper of the Lord; and during the darkness that

succeeded, he agonized, was betrayed, and condemned.

The angel of the Lord released the imprisoned apostles by night, and sent them forth to preach; and the Philippian jailer was alarmed at midnight by the earthquake, and convicted by the Spirit of his sins, inquired what he must do to be saved.

And shall it be at night when the sign of the Son of man shall be seen in the heavens, and the Judge shall come with power and great glory? We know, at least, that "he shall come as a thief in the night."

What scenes then of glory and terror by night has this earth witnessed during its pilgrimage of nearly six thousand years! What lights and shadows have brightened or darkened its bosom as it advanced on its mission to fulfil its appointment by God! These things we now "see through a glass darkly," but by-and-by God's people shall come to a place of which it is said, "And there shall be no night there"—no scenes of sin, sorrow, weariness, ignorance, desolation, fear, death; where there shall be no need of darkness to render the glory more luminous and magnificent; where the Lord God giveth the light,

and the Lamb is the unfading glory. And by-and-by the enemies of God shall come to a world all night—all darkness, where there is naught but weariness, sin, sorrow, desolation, death, and these unchanging and for ever.

How awful will it be for the sinner to pass away and miss the enjoyment of heaven's eternal day, and to feel that there will be naught for him but the utter darkness of hell! How terrible to think that, in some period of eternity, his spirit may be crying in the weariness of its torment to him that keepeth guard at its prison door, "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?" And the watchman cannot answer, "The morning cometh;" but in a voice that sounds the knell of a spirit left in hopelessness for ever, he says, "Night, night, night for ever and ever!"

But no night scene of the Bible exceeds that of the transfiguration in instruction and in glory.



MATT. 17 : 1 : “And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart.”

MARK 9 : 2 : “And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into a high mountain apart by themselves.”

LUKE 9 : 28 : “He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.”



II.

THE PLACE.

“When in ecstasy sublime
Tabor’s glorious mount I climb,
In the too transporting light
Darkness rushes o’er my sight.”



So early as the sixth century Mount Tabor was fixed upon as “the high mountain apart” of the evangelic narrative.

But modern travellers are not agreed respecting the sufficiency of the evidences afforded as to its being the scene of the Saviour’s transfigured glory. God has doubtless left the precise locality in uncertainty, that we may think more of the Saviour who consecrated the place with his presence than of the locality itself.

If it was on Tabor, no rising ground on earth could have been better adapted for a miniature sketch of heaven. It is a mountain about one thousand feet high, terminating in a beautiful plain at the top, about three miles in diameter, and affording a most magnificent

view of the surrounding country. To this mountain height, perchance, it was that Jesus led his three disciples, to give them a glimpse of his inexpressible glory as he laid aside for a little the garments of a servant, and put on for a transient hour his coronation robes.

Under the Old Testament dispensation, mountains were often selected by God as places of divine manifestation and glory. Moriah, Horeb, Sinai, Pisgah, Nebo, Ebal, Carmel, Zion have all been scenes of God's wondrous doings.

It may be that God chose grand and striking features of nature to fix the locality of events so that they can never fade from the memory of man. Thus the giving of the law needs no lofty column of stone to commemorate the event: Mount Sinai lifts its awful form towards the clouds, a perpetual unwasting monument. God's exhibition of himself to the awe-struck prophet as he passed by him, heralded by the storm, the earthquake, and the flame, requires no pyramid to consecrate the spot. Mount Horeb tells where the Almighty shrouded his glory and covered the human face with his fearful hand, so that his brightness might not destroy the being who

would fix on him his gaze. In like manner the transfiguration of the Saviour requires no pillar of brass to arrest the eye or aid the senses, as man contemplates the place where the wondrous scene occurred.

Mountain summits stand through every age the silent yet eloquent recorders of some of the dealings of heaven with earth. Jesus often resorted to them, and made them not unfrequently the place of his labors and of his devotions. That inimitable sermon recorded in the earlier chapters of Matthew was delivered upon a mount. Upon the mountains of Capernaum, Tiberias, and Bethsaida he healed the sick, fed the hungry, spent all night in prayer, and taught his disciples how to pray. Upon Mount Zion he instituted that supper which his followers are to observe "till he come;" and from the mount of Olives he ascended again to glory.

Many of the great events connected with the salvation of man have taken place upon mountains. David said, "I will look unto the hills whence cometh my help;" and we need not wonder as we behold the Saviour leading his three disciples to "a high mountain apart," to be transfigured before them. Its solitude

and far removal from human intercourse and the sounds of busy life, rendered it more adapted for an exhibition of his transfigured glory than the city or the plain.

Jesus doubtless chose the mountain mainly for the seclusion and quiet of the place where, far away from the haunts of vice and the sound of man's reviling, he could receive tokens of the unchanging approbation of Heaven, of the sympathy of the spirits of the just made perfect, and where he could give to "his own" proofs of his oneness with the Father. Thus this "high mountain apart" came to be baptized with a flood of heavenly glory.

History records a very different scene on Tabor. In the year 1799, Napoleon Bonaparte occupied a seat on Tabor while watching the conflict of armies in the plain beneath. An army of Moslem troops, far superior to his own in numbers, had attacked the French forces, about three thousand strong, under the command of Kleber. The thunders of cannon and the fierce rattle of musketry, with the strains of martial music, filled the air. The smoke of battle rolled furiously over the hosts; Napoleon descended the mountain followed by his little band, joined Kleber at a critical

moment in the fight, discomfited the opposing Turks, and drove them to the fords of Jordan, where Murat sabred them down without mercy, and Bonaparte was crowned with laurel.

What a strange contrast between the battle of Napoleon and the transfiguration of Christ! Christ and Napoleon on the same mountain! the one with his wasting cannon by his side, the other with the lawgiver and prophet just from glory. The piety of heaven and the wickedness of hell are strangely blended in the shifting scenes of earth.

This Tabor, it is supposed, around whose summit the smoke of battle hung, and whose sides reverberated with the groans and shrieks of the butchered dying, Peter in one of his epistles calls "THE HOLY MOUNT"—holy, not by the consecration of priests, but by the sacred associations connected with it. In itself it was not more sacred than the hills upon which pagan Rome was built, but Peter received on that mount spiritual impressions; and whenever that mountain loomed up in his memory, it was in connection with these holy things.

And all good men have "holy mounts." Sacred persons will always have sacred places.

Wherever the tear of penitence has flowed and the rebellious will has surrendered—wherever the heart has been made soft and the great vow has been recorded—wherever pardon has been obtained and the lamp of hope kindled—wherever the bright cloud of love has overshadowed us, and the voice sweeter than that of an angel has spoken to us—wherever these things have occurred, in vale or on hill, in the bosom of the family or on the surging sea, in the workshop or in the sanctuary, that place will be sacred to the soul, because of the holy impressions that soul has there received.

The place that is thus “holy” to one may not be holy to another. “The high mountain apart” was “holy” only to the three disciples who witnessed the scene and experienced the emotions it awakened. The other disciples would not probably speak of it as “holy.” Jacob’s holy place was where he wrestled with the angel until the break of day. Nathanael’s holy place was under the fig-tree, where he was seen by the Saviour at prayer. Zaccheus’ “holy place,” the sycamore-tree on whose branches he sat when the Saviour looked up and said, “Zaccheus, make haste and come

down, for to-day I must abide at thy house." Paul's "holy place," the spot on which he fell beneath God's stroke of light on his way to Damascus.

I cannot doubt that every child of God has some such holy place. It may be the pew in which the individual sat when he heard the word that penetrated to his inmost soul. It may be the room in which he met with a few bosom friends to pour out their united supplications to God. It may be the wayside along which he walked as the voice of the Saviour was heard saying, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" and the reply that came from his heart of hearts was, "Lord, that I may receive my sight—that I may see things in the light of eternity." It may be the closet in which he knelt and committed himself to God, or the chamber where he stood with breaking heart and tearful eye, as he watched the sharpening features and heaving breast and glazing eye of that loved one, dear to him as his own soul, as he or she passed away to glory.

There is no place so wild or lonely that it cannot become the scene of fellowship with God. "a holy mount." When John was in

Patmos, an outcast from society and far from the friends and work he loved, he was "in the spirit on the Lord's day," and had the brightest prospects of the triumphs of the gospel and of the glory of the Lamb.

It is not well, therefore, to be without our "holy place." We may not have the fields into which we can go at even, like Isaac, to meditate; nor a fig-tree beneath which we can kneel, like Nathanael; nor a sycamore-tree up which we can climb, like Zaccheus, to see the Saviour as he passes by; but we can have some place of privacy and retiredness from the busy scenes of life to which we can go, as we say to the things of the world, as Abraham said to the young men, "Abide ye here, while I and the lad go yonder and worship."

Such a place will be to us a Tabor, where we can see Jesus in his beauty and glory, where we shall hear voices from the spirit-land saying to our immortal souls, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him;" and where, as we rise from our knees, we shall be ready to join with Peter in saying, "Lord, it is good to be here."

MATTHEW 17:1: "And after six days, Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart."

MARK 9:2: "And after six days, Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into a high mountain apart by themselves."

LUKE 9:28: "He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray."

III.

THE COMPANY.

“Where would I be?

With thee, O Christ, in lands of light,
With thee, O Christ, in lands of night,
Or with thee in Gethsemane ;
Oh, more than all, with thee!”



LET us join this company as they ascend the mountain. It is formed of Jesus and his three disciples—Peter, James, and John. These three had been partners in secular business, and were now to become eye-witnesses of the majesty of Jesus. Jesus, we may suppose, goes a little before, as their Leader and Commander, and also as their Forerunner to the glory that shall soon surround them, as well as to that which shall be revealed hereafter.

Though he is “a man of sorrows,” there is something unearthly about his mien, and a pleasing sadness has settled upon his face. A mild serenity overspreads his countenance.

His whole demeanor declares he is "full of grace and truth;" and he is evidently aware that he is going where glory awaits him, and where he "shall be declared to be the Son of God with power."

Peter, we may suppose, is on his right, nearly by his side. There is an emphasis in his very step; a strange earnestness is visible in every lineament of his face, and his forward movement has something in it which characterizes him as rash and impetuous, though most loving and sincere.

John, perchance, is on the left, and next to the heart of Jesus, for he is the disciple whom Jesus loves. There is a transcendent beauty visible in his every feature. What a sweetness in his smile! What an ineffable repose upon his brow! What a mild lustre in his eye! There is a babe-like simplicity in his mien, and an artless, tender loveliness beaming in his very face. We might readily take him to be the writer of that sweet sentence, "God is love."

James, the Lord's brother, is, we may imagine, by the side of John. There is a firmness also in his tread, accompanied by mild, heavenly determination in his whole demeanor

which well befits the apostle who should first seal the doctrines of the gospel with his blood.

Behold this interesting group! The Saviour, with his three favorite disciples, climbing together the holy mount. We say *favorite* disciples; for do they not merit the epithet because of Christ's treatment of them on several occasions?

When He puts all out, and takes the child's mother and goes into the chamber of death, who are the disciples whom he suffers to follow him to witness his raising from the dead "Jairus the ruler's daughter?" Peter and James and John.

When He goes into Gethsemane's garden, to wrestle with the powers of darkness and to be agonized with the burden of his people's sins, who are the disciples whom he takes with him to listen to his supplications with strong crying and tears, and to be witnesses of his sweat as drops of blood falling down to the ground? Peter and James and John.

When He ascends the mount, to be transfigured and foreshow the coming of the Son of man in his kingdom, who are selected to be eye-witnesses of his majesty, ere they shall taste of death? Peter and James and John.

But why, it may be asked, were these three disciples so often and so peculiarly favored by the Lord ?

We answer : Jesus, as God, is a sovereign Being, and may do many things of the reason for which we must be content to be ignorant. When he is pleased to give a reason, it is our privilege to accept it ; but when he chooses to be silent, it is our duty to bow and acquiesce.

These three—Peter and James and John—were chosen from the apostolic company with that distinguishing love which is certainly to be traced in the dealings of Christ. He loves all his people—loves them largely, richly, freely. But he takes some of them at times, as it were, “apart,” for the special revelation of the glory of his grace.

To all his real disciples he manifests himself as he does not unto the world. Though there were only three disciples at this time beholding his glory, yet all the disciples had frequently beheld it in his wondrous miracles and mighty works. And so do all his true people behold it now in a manner peculiar to themselves. They see Christ as no others see him. Yea, they obtain a view of him to which

all others are strangers. Hence, while to some he is little more than a mere abstraction, or a mere historic personage, by his people he is loved, trusted, and gloried in. They see in him a glory which is real, substantial, un-earthly, and divine. To him they give their love and reverence and confidence, resting on him all their hopes for eternity, and going without a fear into that dark future, when they can feel that they have a firm hold of him and he has a firm hold of them.

But while all Christ's people have some discoveries of Christ made to them, all have not the same discoveries, nor are all alike privileged with frequent manifestations. Here are three of the disciples on this mount with their transfigured Lord, beholding his glory ; while the others, with one exception perhaps as faithful as they, are at the foot of the mount, out of the sight of his glory.

And thus variously does Jesus deal even now with his disciples. He does not manifest himself to them all in the same manner nor to the same extent. To one he reveals conspicuously one part of his glorious character, and to another another part ; causing some of his people to discover with peculiar clearness and

delight the completeness of his righteousness, the place he holds in their salvation ; while others for a time see this dimly or distantly, or do not see it at all, but are delighted chiefly with the all-sufficiency of his sacrifice, or the love and tenderness of his heart.

To some, again, He vouchsafes a discovery of his electing love, giving them an assurance of their interest in him, causing them to see, and that with the clearest evidence, that he has called and chosen them ; while others can only hope that they are his, and can see only this, that “ he is nigh to all that call upon him,” and “ casteth out none that come to him,” and their admiration of him rests on the freeness, openness, and expansiveness of his love.

And his manifestations of himself to the same individual are different at different times : now by his providence and Spirit displaying to him one part of his character ; and anon, by some new operation of his Spirit, bringing some other perfection of his nature to sight, and impressing the greatness and preciousness of that perfection upon his soul. Thus Peter and James and John, who are to-day upon the mount, beholding his glory in all the

splendor of his godhead, are in a few days or weeks gazing upon him in Gethsemane in the very utmost weakness of his manhood.

Sometimes we can see reasons for these varied dealings of Jesus with his people, in their character, conduct, and circumstances ; but oftener still we must resolve it into the “Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight.” Sometimes he makes us feel that he will not only choose his people where he will, and make whom he will his people, but that when he has made them his people, he will deal with them as he will, and divide to every man out of the riches and outpouring of his grace severally as he will.

Be it ours to covet earnestly the best gifts, to seek to be among those greatly honored of God ; not only of the twelve, but also of the three, that we may look far into Gethsemane’s gloom, and have a refreshing glimpse of Tabor’s glory.

We should seek to be a Noah who found grace in the eyes of the Lord, or an Abraham who was called the friend of God, or a Daniel, the man greatly beloved ; thus seeking, not indeed, like the mother of Zebedee’s children, more worldly honor and glory than our breth-

ren in Christ, but a place in the Saviour's bosom and a seat upon his throne, so that Christianity may shine in us in its truest, brightest lustre, and the "glory that excelleth" may accrue to God.

To the question why these three disciples were so peculiarly favored and honored by Him, grace, grace, distinguishing grace, is the only reply. Peter and James and John, as they ascended the mountain with their Lord and Master, and marvelled at the privilege they enjoyed while the other disciples were below in the plain, might, each one for himself, have adopted the language of Paul, and said, "By the grace of God, I am what I am."

But it is not inconsistent with the grand dignity of the godhead, to understand that Jesus, as a man, has his special friends. "He loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus," and their home was his frequent resort. John was the disciple whom Jesus loved, not as he loves you and me only, and as he loved the rest of his disciples, but whom he loved as a special friend. Christ was truly man as well as truly God. Exclude sin from him, and he had all the joys and sorrows, sympathies and sufferings, partialities and preferences, loves

and likings, with which all humanity is penetrated. "To know him after the flesh," to enjoy his peculiar friendship, was a privilege confined to few, but a privilege granted to Peter, James, and John when he took them to be witnesses of his transfigured glory.

And Jesus, in this particularity of his love as man, hath set us an example in which we may follow his steps. In his example we see enough to justify the *partialities of friendship*. He would not have us indeed shut up "our bowels of compassion" against any of our fellow-creatures, for we are to "do good unto all men as we have opportunity;" but he teaches us by his own example that we are not expected to take every man into our bosom. We are at liberty to choose and select. We may have many friends whom we highly esteem; but, like David, we may have but one Jonathan, as dear to us as our own soul; or, like David's Lord, one John whom we would permit to lean upon our bosom at supper. Every man must have, and has a right to have, his special intimate friends. His very nature demands it. The word of God approves it, and the God-man, in his frequent resortings to the family at Bethany, and in his singling out

Peter and James and John on several occasions as witnesses of his power, sufferings, and glory, has set his seal to the truth that we may have our favorite ones.

But there may have been *another* reason why Jesus selected these three disciples to be witnesses of his glory. These three are called by the apostle Paul, "pillars" in the church; that is, eminent among their brethren, distinguished, and, by the grace of God, singularly excellent men.

Peter was noted for his zeal and earnestness, as well as for the noble confession he had just made: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." He also was the first who should make known the gospel of the kingdom both among Jews and Gentiles—one in whom there slumbered a wisdom and sagacity, a fervor and an eloquence, which the first touch of the fiery tongue of Pentecost aroused into an undying flame, to become a light, a glory, and a defence around the infant church.

He was the first, as we have said, to confess Christ; but alas, was also the first to dissuade him from dying. He may have been selected, therefore, partly because of his noble confession, and partly because of his weak-

ness, which needed to be corrected by giving him an encouraging view of the Saviour's glory.

James was the first apostle who yielded up his life for the truth—the van of that noble army of martyrs who sealed the doctrines of the gospel with their blood ; and the sight of the transfigured Saviour was well adapted to encourage him to follow Christ even to death, that he might be a partaker of his glory.

John was the teacher of the deity of the Lord Jesus—his bosom friend, his youngest follower, his beloved disciple, the survivor of all the other disciples, who at the last hour, after having experienced severe persecutions, still proclaimed his Master to the heathen world. He needed to be qualified for all this by the Transfiguration ; and as a defender of Christ's deity and glory, he could truly say, “ We beheld his glory.”

Besides, these three were to be witnesses of that agony and bloody sweat in the garden of Gethsemane ; and they needed to see this great glory, that they might descend from the mount, and be prepared to endure the sight of that great agony in the garden. It was necessary to the strengthening of their faith,

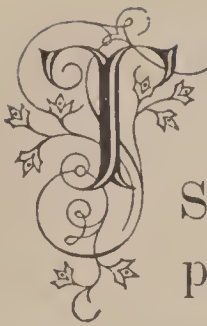
to be first on Tabor before they came to Gethsemane. They required the strength of the one, that they might be enabled to pass triumphantly through the pains and agonies of the other. The revelation of the glory of Christ prepared them to be witnesses of his humiliation. Yea, they were so depressed with the tidings of his death, that they needed some strong stimulus to sustain and invigorate their fainting spirits and failing hearts. Christ therefore takes them to show them in the brightness of Tabor that the crown is connected with the cross ; that the glorified One is he who was the Crucified ; and that he who should sink so low that his own friends would ignorantly forsake him, was nevertheless he who should ascend so high that angels would become his convoy to the skies, and cherubim and seraphim should continually cry, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of Hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory."

LUKE 9:28: "He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray."

IV.

THE PRAYER.

“Oh, Thou by whom we come to God,
The Life, the Truth, the Way,
The path of prayer thyself hast trod ;
Oh, teach us how to pray.”

 HE gospels are full of proofs that Jesus was both God and man. Such proofs meet us on almost every page. At the grave of Lazarus he weeps as a man, and then says, “Come forth!” like a God. Approaching the barren fig-tree, he hungers as a man, and then with a word withers the fig-tree like a God. During a raging storm in the sea of Tiberias, he lay in the hinder part of the ship and slept like a man ; and being called upon by the affrighted disciples, he arose and rebuked the winds like a God. Having wrought a stupendous miracle, he goes into a mountain apart to pray like a man ; and in the fourth watch of the night, he comes to his disciples walking on the sea like a God. On yonder bloody tree he suffers like a man ; and then opens

the gates of Paradise to the dying thief like a God. In yonder sepulchre, wrapped in a winding-sheet, the blessed Jesus lies cold and pale in death like a man ; but on the morning of the third day, by his own immortal energies, he bursts the bonds of death, and rises triumphant like a God. After his resurrection, meeting with his disciples, he takes a piece of broiled fish and of a honey-comb, and eats with them as a man ; and then leads them out to Bethany, and blesses them ; and as he blesses them he ascends in radiant majesty far above all heavens.

The narrative of the transfiguration affords us another of these proofs. He appeared before his disciples on that mount in glory and majesty as God ; but before that wondrous change passed over him, he knelt as man, and poured out his supplications to God. “He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to *pray*. And as he prayed he was transfigured before them.”

Indeed, every important event in his history is preceded or connected with prayer.

He prayed at his baptism, before ordaining his disciples, when he saw the tide of popularity taking a strange turn in his favor—men

desiring to take and make him a king—when about to enter into the mysterious scenes of his suffering, and when he breathed out his soul in death.

One evangelist tells us that “when he had sent the multitude away he went up into a mountain apart to pray, and when evening was come he was there alone.” Another relates that, after closing his beneficent labors, “he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and there prayed.” “He went up into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer.” As he was praying in a certain place, when he had ceased one of his disciples said to him: “Lord, teach us to pray.” Again and again it is recorded that when food was spread before him he looked up to heaven, blessed the bread, and brake it for distribution to his disciples and among the multitude.

Prayer thus finds its warrant and sanction in the life of Christ. As a man, he always gave glory to his Father, rejoiced in the tokens of his favor, and by prayer owned his dependence upon him.

The nature he had condescended to assume, required these exercises of devotion. If they are entered upon reluctantly or proceeded with

as a painful task ; if we have cold hearts in them, and almost faithless, hopeless souls, all this is our sinful infirmity, of which Christ was in no measure a partaker. His devotions were more like the pure, fresh sanctities of Eden, where prayer was a delight, meditation was repose, nearness to God was meat and drink, and the heart-strings beat responsively to the grateful music of heaven. He found a sanctuary anywhere—in the temple, in the garden, in the wilderness, on the mountain-side ; and in each of these, in communion with his Father, he laid up strength for his soul, and drew down the blessings God designed to give. Prayer, that

“Motion of a hidden fire,
That trembles in the breast,”

was as much a part of his human nature as love, pity, joy, or pain. As he could not avoid weeping at the grave of Lazarus, or feeling love for faithful friends, or sighing in spirit at unbelief, or compassionating the multitude in their hunger and the bereaved in their distress, so neither could he avoid the welling up of those affections which seek their gratification in retirement and find their rest in God.

His prayers were required to obtain the blessings sought. "Ask of me," says the Father to the Son, "and I will give thee." Prayer was, therefore, the means by which the blessings were bestowed. Christ, as man, could not, more than any "mere man," obtain without prayer the things necessary for the carrying out of his appointed work. He who, in the strength of his divinity, could move the mountains, lay the storm, and bind the rebel spirit of man in a loving chain, yet prayed for Peter's faith, that it might not fail; for the sin of his crucifiers, that it might be blotted out; and that God would make his glory known at the grave of Lazarus. The petitions that he offered when

"Cold mountains and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervor of his prayer,"

were as much needed for the accomplishment of our salvation, as the miraculous deeds which were done by his hand. He had not only to redeem us with his precious blood, but to pray that we might be made willing to avail ourselves of the ransom. Not only had our sins to be expiated, but our unbelief to be cured, and our antipathies to be overcome. He died to accomplish the one; he prayed to effect the other. We dare not conjecture what would

have been the result if his prayers had been omitted; for in the case of the perfect Saviour, his death and prayers were inseparable.

The prayers of the Saviour also seem to have been required, that his pure human spirit might be qualified and fitted to go through its mighty work in the redemption of mankind.

When the closing days of his human existence here were near at hand, we hear him send forth the ardent petition, "Father, save me from this hour!" and in his agony in the garden these words were uttered with strong crying and tears: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." The language burns with the intensity of the conflict in which he was then engaged, and which he felt it was in the power of prayer to mitigate, or at least to give him strength to endure. His prayer was not offered in vain, the words immediately following, "there appeared unto him an angel from heaven, strengthening him."

But there are mysteries here upon which we dare not trench. We must not try to pierce farther into Gethsemane's gloom. Let us, however, pause long enough beside the praying Saviour to learn what a powerful exercise of the human soul that must be which

could make Christ himself stronger than he was ; and what a momentous necessity of the spiritual life that must be with which even Christ himself could not dispense. The period was now reached which was the most critical and anxious one in his whole pilgrimage upon the earth ; and therefore he must needs seek retirement for prayer. Hence he went up into a mountain apart to pray. But who can adequately translate those “strong crying and tears ?” Oh, could we have stood by his side on that “holy mount,” at that midnight hour, we might perchance have heard from him these plaintive sounds : “Lord, who hath believed our report ? I am come unto my own, and my own receive me not ! I am become a stranger unto my brethren ; an alien to my mother’s children. Consider mine enemies, for they are many ; and they hate me with a cruel hatred ! Arise, O Lord ; let not man prevail. Thou that dwellest between the cherubim, shine forth ! Show me a token for good ! Father, glorify thy name !”

But we may not put words into the Saviour’s mouth at the mercy-seat, save those which the Holy Ghost teacheth. He gives us the mind of Christ.

And Christ must be our pattern, as well as our righteousness and joy. Next to "winning Christ and being found in him," we must make it our one great desire and effort through life to be *like* him. Happy are those who thus spend the days of their earthly pilgrimage. They may be days of suffering, and some of them days of darkness, but they are all days which will merge into brightness and joy.

It seems wonderful that Christ should pray. He had no sins to be pardoned. He had no wants but such as his own power could supply ; and yet we find him, "in the days of his flesh, offering up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears." This betokens weakness and need. In "all things" he must be made like unto us," that we might have in all things a perfect pattern.

He was a pattern, therefore, to us, in his *special seasons of prayer*.

He prayed at his *baptism*. Prayer and baptism, in his case, went together. And the ordinances of God's grace must be sanctified to us by prayer. We must not put God's ordinances in God's place. We must not expect the tools of themselves to do the work of the great Workman. The ordinances are but

channels of grace through which God conveys blessings to our souls. The blessing upon the sermon must be sought at home, and then in the sanctuary again, before the sermon begins, or it may be to us little more than a “sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.” It is the praying soul that feeds upon the Saviour “in the heart with thanksgiving.” It is the praying mind that drinks of the Saviour’s precious blood at the Lord’s table. All others take the bread and wine, and nothing else. They go away as they came, without a blessing.

Christ offered up special prayer before he commissioned his apostles and sent them forth to preach the gospel. It was an important and serious business; and before he engaged in it, we read that “he went into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.”

“And when it was day,” before any business or interruption intervened, “he called his disciples, and of them he chose twelve.” This is the example that he hath left us. It would impress upon us this lesson—that we ought to *abound* in prayer before engaging in or entering upon any new or important business. As it is superstitious to expect ordi-

nances and sacraments to benefit us by any power in themselves, so it is even worse to expect our attention and sagacity to do it. All things are in God's hand. He is concerned in all our affairs, and he *will* be concerned in them. He either gives us success in them or baffles and disappoints us. Our wisdom and industry against the course of his providence, are mere straws against the wind's course. They can do nothing but break and be swept away. Then let us think of this in the commencement of our undertakings. When, like the blessed Saviour, we turn aside and pray before we begin, then we may enter upon them with a consciousness that God is above; and the thought of this gives calmness, courage, and strength while pursuing them. "Acknowledge me," he says, "in all thy ways." We have acknowledged him, and let the issue be what it will, all will be well. He will bring to pass the issue that will be best for us.

Other special seasons of prayer in which Jesus should be a pattern to us, as when our friends are in peculiar danger or sorrow, or when trouble is expected to come or is really upon us, might with profit be considered; but

this season of exceeding enjoyment and honor upon which we are dwelling must suffice.

Jesus knew that he was to be transfigured ; and therefore we have it recorded that “ He took Peter and John and James and went up into a mountain to *pray*.” He would have the pleasure and glory that was coming upon him come upon him praying. “ And as he prayed,” it is added, “ the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering.” His praying was an acknowledgment that the honor coming on him was the gift of God ; and it was an indication also that a creature of God needs help from Him, to enable him to bear honor and greatness. The honors as well as the sorrows of his humiliation he was too weak, in his human nature, to bear, and therefore he supplicates strength from above to sustain him under them. This teaches us how hard it is, as the old divines express it, to “ carry a full cup.” Nothing is more dangerous to man than honor or prosperity. Pride of heart is often excited and fostered by it. An undue love of honor or prosperity is called into exercise by it. The soul is absorbed in its enjoyment of it. There is a contentedness with the mercy, and a forget-

fulness of God. The soul becomes oblivious to its real station and duties in the world. Peter experienced this. He was so absorbed in delight at the vision of his Master's glory that he forgot every thing else.

But turn to the Master himself. Unutterable delight must have filled his soul at that hour. It must have been exceedingly sweet, in his human nature, to talk, probably for the first time in that nature, with glorified men ; it must have been an earnest and foretaste of the blessedness and glory that awaited him hereafter.

Yet he was not absorbed in the pleasure he was enjoying. His great work on earth was still on his thoughts ; his great business on earth was still foremost in his mind. Therefore he did not hear from his heavenly visitants of the glory of that world from which he came, and the rest that remaineth there at last for the wearied sufferer on earth, nor did they tell him of the joy and the crown that awaited him when his bitter cup of suffering should be drank ; but they "spoke of the decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem."

We may not fear mercies, but we ought to fear the receiving and enjoying of them with-

out prayer. Many a Christian's mercies are embittered to him because he did not receive and enjoy them prayerfully. Mercies are not only a fresh call from God for thanksgiving and praise, but for earnest supplication. A weak, sinful creature is not to be trusted alone with favors from God. His prayer should be, Give me thy Spirit, and never take it from me. Perhaps no Christian spends as much time in prayer as he ought, or follows closely enough the example of Christ in having special seasons of prayer. .

If prayer be the strength of the soul, the repose of the heart, the antidote to the world, the dread of the evil one; if the flesh is mortified by it, and the cross endured through it; if sanctification is advanced by it, and the Spirit of God speaks through its voice; yea, if heaven itself is to be entered as its last breath dies away—why do we pray so languidly and so little? We pray so languidly because so little. We do not realize as we ought the profit there is in thus serving the Lord. Oh, if we are weary with praying with our Master for one hour in the garden, how can we be fitted for never-ending service with those who stand before the throne?

If ever we mean to see God's face in joy, we must know what prayer, *private, personal* prayer is. If we are of those who go to God's house, and go daily to their business, and see their fellow-creatures and friends, yea, perhaps their very children suffering, or are brought into suffering themselves, and yet none of these things ever send them to the throne of grace; if we have the stiff, stubborn knee and the unimploring heart amid them all—can all this be right? A praying Master—a prayerless disciple! A praying Saviour—a prayerless sinner! A God incarnate praying—walking the earth praying; a sinning, weak, and needy child of the earth, walking that same earth upright, never bending before his God—without prayer! Can that course of life be safe? Does it meet the approval of God? Can it be well at last with that sinner's soul?

LUKE 9:29 : “And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering.”

MARK 9:3 : “And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow ; so as no fuller on earth can white them.”

MATT. 17:2 : “And was transfigured before them : and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.”

V.

THE TRANSFIGURATION.

“Christ, whose glory fills the skies ;
Christ, the true and only Light ;
Sun of righteousness, arise,
Triumph o’er the shades of night ;
More and more thyself display,
Shining to the perfect day.”



ET us now ascend the hill, and see the great sight which the Lord our God will show us. The Son of God is on that height ; his three loved disciples are beside him. They have walked together up the toilsome way, and now the four stand on the distant summit. How grand the scene ! The dome of heaven spreads out above them with its worlds of light and beauty. In the west are seen the dark outlines of Carmel standing against the sky ; in yonder basin rests the placid sea of Tiberias ; and far below, on those neighboring plains, shepherds watch their flocks.

But anon Jesus kneels in prayer to his father. Beneath the clear vault of heaven,

and amid the stillness of the night, he would commune with Him. With Jesus, the spiritual outweighs the carnal, the divine the human; the temporal is lost in the eternal. No weariness, no fatigue, no hour can hinder his appointed work.

And as he knelt in supplications, and from his lips there went forth such utterances as never man spoke, lo, he is transfigured! What a sublime scene is passing before the disciples as that Nazarene pours out his heart to God! The Son of Mary, the carpenter of Nazareth, the wanderer, with whom they ate and drank and travelled on foot many a weary mile, in all the intimacy of companions and friends, begins to change before their eyes. Over his coarse garments is spread a strange light, brightening into intenser beauty, till his whole frame glows with a celestial splendor. The man has put on the God. He from whom men hid their faces, was now so arrayed in superhuman brightness, that they would be compelled to veil them.

All the evangelists agree that this change was sudden, unearthly, glorious. Every vestige of humiliation was, for the moment, laid aside and lost; the Star of Bethlehem eclipsed

the sun in his strength ; the “ Root out of the dry ground ” towered above the cedars of Lebanon ; the form of a servant was superseded by the dignity of the Heir of all things ; and the outcast and scorned of men appeared in all the effulgence and light of God.

His form, which had been bent under a load of sorrow, now erected itself, like the palm-tree from pressure, and he became as a pillar in the temple of our God. His brow expanded, its wrinkles of care fled, and the sweating drops of his climbing toil were transmuted into sparks of glory. The Divinity from within threw out upon his manhood a holy splendor. His nature remained the same as it was before, but that nature appeared in a glorified form. An upper garment of glory was thrown over the tabernacle of flesh, in which for a season he had been pleased to enshrine and conceal his godhead. Heaven was written upon his countenance, and each opening pore beamed with indwelling Deity. Meekness gave way to majesty, sadness to dazzling glory, the look of pity to the grandeur of a God.

How this change was effected, we would not curiously inquire. Of one thing we may

be sure : there was no change in the bodily substance of our Lord, and no destruction of the proper attributes of humanity, because he lived some time after in the flesh, and in the flesh had still to die.

The whole scene was a faint and broken type of the same Jesus in his glorified state : as he was seen by one of these three chosen witnesses in the glorious vision of Patmos afterwards ; as the eye of faith and love and holy fervor can behold him now, “ walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks,” flashing the fire of his all-consuming eye upon the worship of the dissembler and the false-hearted ; but laying his right hand upon the penitent and the burdened and the trembling, saying, “ Fear not !”

“ The fashion of his countenance was altered.” Not in its lineaments or features, but with rays of glory, beaming forth in mild and holy lustre. That sad and solemn countenance, which had been so often seen bending over the couch of the dying, and entering the door of the huts of poverty, and passing through the streets of Jerusalem, and pausing weary by the wayside, ay, even bedewing the grave with tears—that countenance now glows

with a rapturous brightness. The still radiance of heaven sits on that serene brow, and a strange beauty has glowed over that face which was so lately furrowed with care and wrinkled with sorrow. He is so dazzlingly refulgent, that no man could behold him, except as shrouded in his manhood, and live. And that same brightness, which so illumines the celestial temple as to render all created light unnecessary, will destroy all his adversaries at his second coming.

“And his face did shine as the sun.” The face of Moses, after his communings with God, shone so that the people could not look upon his face. But the resplendent rays which distinguished the face of Moses, were borrowed—the effect of converse with God. But the rays that emanate from Christ are like those of the sun underived; and though since he became a man they have been covered with his flesh, as with a cloud, they now shine forth in power and glory. To Paul, on his way to Damascus, he appears as a light above the brightness of the sun. To the beloved disciple in Patmos, he was revealed as “the sun in his strength,” shining in his meridian splendor; and when we come to the description of the heavenly

city, where the light of the material sun is not needed, it is because the Lamb is the light of it, and its God its glory.

No wonder then that he is called "the Sun of righteousness," for in that face we discover, as in a mirror, the very image of God. Such love, such kindness, such meekness, such gentleness, and yet such majesty and glory, that heaven is unveiled before us in his countenance. Bright in himself, glorious in his person, he communicates his light to the world around. Like some glorious luminary in the morning of creation, shining in its pathway of glory, so He arose over the dark surface of a troubled world, scattering its gloom, dispelling its darkness, and causing the light of the glorious gospel to shine in the hearts of his people.

"Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me," said David ; and with my spiritual firmament lit up with its golden light, I shall march under the shinings of thy countenance to a city which is covered with a flood of glory. Yes, let this face, which did "shine as the sun," shed its purely celestial lustre upon a soul, and the eye of that soul will see before it an illuminated grave and a lit-up eternity ; the valley of the shadow of death

will blaze as though brightened with myriads of torches of the heavenly host, and the far-spreadings of the heavenly land will appear before it in all its distinctness and in all its glory.

It is also declared by the evangelists, that “His raiment became shining and glistening—white as the light—exceeding white as snow, so as no fuller on earth can white them.” Whatever belongs to Jesus, partakes of his glory. His very raiment, wrapped in a shower of radiance, becomes whiter than mortal man could make it. The very robes which he wore became shining, to betoken his glory; became white, to denote his purity, spotless as the untrodden snow. His apparel was not emblematic of terror or of war, as when he came “from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah,” but of innocence and purity. When Daniel beheld him, as “the Ancient of days,” his garments were white as snow; and when John saw him in Patmos, “his head and his hairs were white as wool;” when he is represented as going forth in apocalyptic vision, he is seated on a white horse; and when he comes to judge the quick and the dead, he shall be seated on a white throne; and when he be-

stows the rewards of grace upon the overcoming ones, he shall give them a white stone, and clothe them with white raiment, and they shall "walk with him in white, for they are worthy."

All these are representations of the unsullied purity of his nature as the Holy One of God; of his perfect righteousness as the Just One of Israel; of his personal merit as the Mediator between God and man, who by his death has opened up a way of access into the holiest of all; of the High Priest who became us, who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners;" and who addresses this language to each sinner: "I counsel thee to buy of me—white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear."

What a wondrous sight is this on Tabor! Garments of light, a countenance of light, the presence of the glory of the Lord of light! All our explanations of this wondrous scene are but as the lisplings of infancy. We can only wonder and adore, "beholding his glory," and seek to learn the lessons which his altered countenance, his shining face, and his white and glistering raiment were intended to teach.

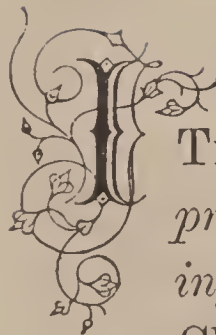
VI.

ITS USE TO THE SAVIOUR.

“Sound the voice through all the ages,
Man has sinned, and man must die ;
God has spoken in his justice—
Can the God of justice lie ?

“Love takes up the challenge, pleading,
God is love, and God hath won
Pardon through the blood-atoning
Of his well-belovéd Son.

“God is Judge, and God the ransom,
Heaven and earth in one rejoice ;
Hushed the earthquake, past the tempest ;
Present is the still small voice.”

N the case of the Saviour, the Transfiguration was well calculated to *prepare him for meeting and encountering the sufferings he was soon to endure.*

Christ was truly man as well as truly God. He had all the feelings of humanity purified from all that was selfish or sinful. That he was susceptible of sorrow, we have ample proof in the groans which he uttered, in the tears which he shed, and in the lines of care which deeply marked his countenance.

He had, as the Son of God, an accurate foreknowledge of every scene of woe through which he had to pass ; and though he had estimated the sum of these sufferings, and was strong in his own energies and resources, and relied with unbending confidence on the promised aid and support of his heavenly Father, yet there were moments when his heart sunk within him, and when every feeling of his nature recoiled at the prospect of his fearful agony and ignominious death, and even an angel came from heaven to strengthen him. He required therefore to be armed with fortitude to meet the evils he was to endure ; and nothing could have been better adapted to effect this than the Transfiguration on the holy mount. The glory with which he was there encircled would cheer and elevate him in the prospect of his coming agonies.

Never, during the previous part of his humiliation, had such honors been conferred upon the Son of God. Now "his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light." This to him must have been a most refreshing foretaste of that glory on which he was to enter when his sufferings were terminated and the victory was won ;

and the remembrance of this scene on the holy mount would nerve him for the endurance, as he experienced the fearful tortures of the crucifix and felt the hidings of his Father's face. It was "the joy that was set before him," of which this mountain glory was an earnest and a pledge, that strengthened him to endure the cross and despise the shame.

And if our Lord, in order to meet the succeeding scenes of his life—dark Gethsemane, and yet darker Calvary—refreshed himself by assuming for an hour the splendor of his adorable divinity, that he might be the better prepared to enter upon the trial which was to come upon him, how thankful should we be that every thing he said and did was for the good of man. He had set his heart upon man's salvation, and he would not fail or be discouraged until that salvation was accomplished. Whatever he needed he would acquire; whatever joy or glory or strength was necessary to help him onward to the cross, he would seek to obtain them by prayer. He knew the truth contained in these lines of the poet:

"Prayer makes the darkened cloud withdraw;
Prayer climbs the ladder Jacob saw,
Gives exercise to faith and love,
Brings every blessing from above."

His subsequent agony in Gethsemane would have been still more overpowering, had the prayer on the holy mount not been offered and the transfigured glory not enjoyed ; but having offered up the one and enjoyed the other, he now goes on to meet his sufferings.

Let us follow his example. Sufferings are before us ; how shall we meet them but in the strength of God ? Sorrows are before us ; how shall we be comforted in them but by the consolations of the God of all comfort ? Death is before us ; how shall we meet it but in the white raiment of Immanuel ? and how shall we obtain these but by prayer, by faith, by a holy consecration of ourselves to God ?

As Jesus prayed the fashion of his countenance was altered. Before he cried he was answered, and while he was yet speaking he was heard. It was a blessed interruption to prayer which thus came upon him ; and, thanks be to God, such transfiguring manifestations are not quite strangers upon the earth now. God sometimes, out of the deepest depths, and out of groanings which cannot be uttered, transports his children suddenly to a kind of heaven upon earth, and their soul is made as the chariots of Aminadab. Their prayers

bring down such light and strength and holy gladness as make their face to shine, adorning them with a kind of celestial radiance.


Let it be ours to cast ourselves at the mercy-seat into the arms of this precious Saviour, and he will lead us to Tabor, and from Tabor to Gethsemane, to Calvary, and through the Jordan to glory.

VII.

ITS USE TO THE DISCIPLES.

“What hill is like to Tabor hill in beauty and in fame?

For there, in sad days of his flesh, o’er Christ a glory came ;
And light o’erflowed him like a sea, and raised his shining brow,
And the voice came forth which bade all worlds the Son of God
avow.”

N every action of our Lord’s life there is set forth, as it were in shadow, some doctrine, some duty, some consolation, or some hope for the edification and instruction of the church of God.

Christ was always teaching—in the humiliations of Bethlehem, in the obscurity of Nazareth, in the solitudes of the wilderness, in the agonies of Gethsemane, and in the mental darkness of the cross. All his sufferings were sermons, and all his miracles a gospel, which they that run might read.

In the outward history of Jesus we have the best commentary on the great mystery of his twofold nature. In that history we have

the clearest witness to the fact that he was both God and man. Our minds, as we read the narrative of his life, get possessed of the fact that "God was manifest in the flesh." He hungered who fed the multitude; he slept who hushed the storm; he received strength from an angel at whose feet angels bow. He who stood on the holy mount, with a countenance radiant as the sun, and with raiment white as the light, not long after was "lifted up" between heaven and earth, a spectacle to angels and to men, fulfilling all that Moses and the prophets had foretold of the "decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem."

The entire scene of the transfiguration *must have been most encouraging to the disciples and most assuring to their faith.* Christ goes up prepared for a beatific vision; in calm and conscious majesty puts on his robes of light, as much as mortal eyes could bear to see of the image of the infinite and invisible God; gives audience to two glorified spirits, till God the Father, by a voice from the excellent glory testifying to the greater beauty of the Son, recalls the servants to their rest.

All this glorious manifestation served to impress the disciples with the unmistakable

divinity of the Saviour. For the most part he had hitherto shrouded his divinity in his suffering humanity. He had been seen as "the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" but now divinity bursts forth in overwhelming effulgence. His whole life, so unostentatious, so unkinglike, so sorrowful, is now covered with the glory of heaven and the manifestation of his Father's perfect love. There shines in him and about him such an effulgence of glory, that the disciples could not for a moment entertain the shadow of a doubt that he was what he claimed to be, the Christ, the Son of God.

He had before this revealed rays of his exalted nature. From his mouth there had fallen words which confounded them. By his hands works had been wrought which had perplexed and bewildered them, and in his serene countenance they had read his unoffending character. But now from his whole frame there goes forth a blaze of glory; yea, his humble Nazarene robe, the very robe which again and again had brought upon him the eye of reproach, shines, glistens with an effulgence brighter than the noonday sun. All this taught the disciples to be more fully

alive to the dignity and responsibility of their calling. It put them in possession of a witness to his divinity which should lead them patiently to endure every reproach, suffer every buffeting, and which would make them strong and triumphant in death, be it at the stake or upon the cross.

And the memory of the disciples treasured up this testimony among its living things. It made delusion or deceit as to their master's mission impossible. "We have not followed cunningly devised fables," said Peter many years afterwards, "when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty."

Again, the sight of their transfigured Master would rectify the misconceptions they had formed of his character, prevent that despondency which the announcement of his death had a tendency to produce, and thus qualify them for the labors they had to prosecute and the trials they had to endure.

The disciples, with the rest of the Jewish nation, had formed very erroneous ideas of the Saviour's person and work. They supposed that he would appear as the assertor of

his country's rights, the champion of her liberty, and the restorer of her faded glory. When they witnessed him apprehended, heard him condemned, beheld him treated as the vilest felon, and saw him nailed to the accursed tree, the spell by which they had been bound to him would be broken, the dream of their bliss would come to an end, and they would feel all the grief, shame, and despair of men whose highest hopes had been blighted, and whose fairest prospects had been covered with darkness.

And what could be better fitted to rectify their false conceptions of their Master's character, prepare their minds for witnessing his suffering, and prevent them from despondency in case of his death, than this glorious vision upon the heights of Tabor. That bright light which encircled their Master might well calm their fears and lull their suspicions, when he would come to be encompassed on Calvary. How could they imagine that the person whose countenance they had seen shining with a heavenly glory, and whose raiment was white and glistening, would be forsaken by God for ever? His character might be aspersed and loaded with the deepest infamy, and he himself doomed

to the death of the vilest slave ; but could they entertain for a moment the thought that God would suffer one so related to him, and so dearly beloved by him, to remain under an eternal eclipse ? Was it not more reasonable and just to conclude that he would emerge from the darkness that surrounded his death, and shine forth in a glory far surpassing in brilliancy even that with which he was irradiated on the holy mount ? Thus, while witnessing the sufferings of the Saviour and their end, they might have felt the keenest grief ; yet the joy of hope would dwell in their hearts, and peace in believing would fill their minds.

The glorious manifestation on Tabor would serve also to impress upon the disciples the illustrious majesty with which he will appear for ever in the midst of the universal church. In the conversation with his disciples recorded in the preceding verses of the gospel narrative, Jesus had told them that the Son of man would come in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels, and would reward every man according to his works. The transfiguration was a picture or exemplification of this.

The appearance of Christ, when he will come the second time, will be that of God.

Language is inadequate to express the splendor and majesty which will adorn his face, encircle his person, and make his way one of dazzling brightness and terrible power. He will not come as the babe of Bethlehem, as the despised Nazarene, as the man of sorrows, as the meek and lowly Jesus, but as the "King of kings and Lord of lords." He will appear with all the ensigns of majesty and regal dignity that become his character as Judge of the quick and of the dead. His first coming was in the likeness of sinful flesh; his second coming will be in the glory of God. At his first coming he was attended by a few poor and despised fishermen; at his second coming he will be attended by a retinue of myriads of his saints and by all his holy angels. All created lights will be quenched by the brightness of his coming. "The earth shall quake before him, the heavens shall tremble, the sun and moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining, for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible, and who can abide it?"

We shall see his coming in power and great glory. Will it be in joy and gladness, with thanksgivings and hallelujahs? or will it

be with sorrow and dismay, with lamentations and gnashing of teeth ?

If we would be like him in his transfigured glory, see him with delight, be glorified with him, and abide with him for ever, then we must “not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds, that we may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God ;” and thus we shall bear his image ; for in that bright scene of Tabor and in the person of the transfigured Saviour we have an evidence of the nature of our glorified humanity.

“We know not what we shall be, but we know that when Christ shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” The members will be as the Head, the children as the Heir and elder Brother ; their vile bodies changed, purified, fashioned like unto his body, at whose superhuman brightness the disciples “were sore afraid.” That body of Christ which coruscated on Tabor with the bright rays of heavenly splendor is the model after which our vile bodies shall be formed.

It did not take long to rear that fabric of glory on the mount. It may be that in an

instant of time Christ was changed into that glory of Tabor. In like manner his people shall arise and "put on their beautiful garments" "in the twinkling of an eye;" their faces shall shine as the sun, and their raiment, borrowed from Christ's spiritual wardrobe, shall be white and glistening. His transfiguration is the pledge and emblem of the future glorification of the saints. He is their pattern and example, both in their sanctification and glorification. They shall be like him in spirituality, like him in holiness, like him in immortality. The glorified body of Christ is the most distinguished object in the universe of God, the purest, the most refined, the most illustrious; and yet this is the exact model after which the bodies of the saints shall be fashioned. There will be no touch of frailty or infirmity upon them, no dimness of eye, no deafness of ear, no feebleness of limb; all will be perfection, all will be beauty. All the parts will be brought together into harmony and perfect accordance, and this spiritual body be eminently fitted to become the companion of the perfected soul in travelling the path of immortal blessedness.

It will be like an exquisite picture set in

a jewelled frame. Who can describe such a change? Words fail, and even thought tires in its effort to conceive, and is lost in anticipation. "We shall bear," says the apostle, "the image of the heavenly." These clods of earth shall become swift as lightning, more lovely than angels in glory, and bright as the meridian sun; but "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." Could we borrow the language of Paradise itself, could we speak with the tongues of angels, language would be insufficient. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be," even to our imagination, however vivid and however fruitful in creating lively images of glory and of bliss, for "heart hath not conceived the things that God has prepared for those who love him." "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." As "his face did shine as the sun," so shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Their face shall be radiant in light and beauty, and their countenance shall be bathed in rich and everlasting lustre.

In the greatness of their number, in the beauty of their character, in the perfection of

their resurrection bodies, in the splendor of their abode, and in the ecstasy of their joy, they shall glorify Jesus for ever and ever. As he was robed in white when he appeared in his garments of glory on Tabor, so shall they walk with him in white. "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?" They are the washed in his blood, the purified by his Spirit, his followers on earth, his companions in glory.

Oh, who can tell the blessedness of these words—the fullness of joy, the beauty of holiness, the fervor of love, the intimacy of companionship? the deep, deep meaning of our Lord's words: "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory?" But such honor have all his saints. "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."

MATT. 17:3: "And behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him."


MARK 9:4: "And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus."

LUKE 9:30: "And behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias."

VIII.

THE HEAVENLY VISITANTS.

“Come, ye saints, look here, and wonder!
Come, behold what love could do
Gaze upon the Victim yonder!
Jesus suffered there for you.
Bid adieu to low desire;
Here let earthly hope expire.”

 HERE is no book which affords such a variety of interesting statements as the word of God. And perhaps no incident in the life of the Saviour furnishes more rich and varied lessons than that of the transfiguration.

We have already ascended the mountain with the Saviour and his three favorite disciples, while the shades of evening were gathering around them. We have knelt with them apart as they engaged in prayer; and have beheld that, as the Saviour prayed, he was transfigured, the fashion of his countenance was altered, his face shining as the sun, and his raiment glistening and white as snow. And now “behold!” another feature is added

to this wondrous scene, to which the Spirit of inspiration calls our attention, and which we shall find worthy of our prayerful meditation.

The company around Jesus is increased. Chosen witnesses from the realms of glory have appeared. Two eminent saints, Moses and Elias, who for ages have been enjoying the happiness of the celestial world, have descended, and, arrayed in the splendid costume of the better country, are seen in earnest conversation with Immanuel. The King of glory has assumed on earth his robes of state—the court-dress of his own palace; and these courtiers of heaven, arrayed in shining raiment, have come to enjoy a private audience.

And who is this Moses? and who is this Elias? The inspired writer tells us. They are “men”—men who have “appeared in glory.” Our curiosity is excited as this fact is announced; and we inquire, *Why is this delegation from the heavenly world to the mount of transfiguration composed of “men,” and not of angels?*

There is a wondrous beauty and propriety in all the proceedings of God. What a suitability in the selection of *men* to be, on this occasion, the visitants and strengtheners of

our Lord! Men are more intimately related to Christ than angels. Both are, indeed, his creatures and his ministering servants; but before the foundations of the earth were laid, his delights were with the sons of men; and when he came to redeem, "he took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham." And now that this human nature which he had assumed was transfigured, it was meet that men—those who had partaken of this flesh and blood—should be called from the skies and *appear with him in glory*.

Nor could the sight of angels have yielded such consolation to the disciples as the appearance of men in a state of glory. How far more refreshing to the disciples—to those wearied with the cares and labors and toils of earth—to have a glimpse of those who had passed through great tribulation, and were now wearing the crown, than to behold a company of shining ones who had kept their first estate, and had always beheld the face of their Father in heaven!

Besides, the appearance of men in glory presented both an argument and an illustration of that glorious change which shall pass upon the body of the redeemed at the last

day—an argument and an illustration of which the disciples in after life made ample use, both in their preaching and in their writings, to instruct, exhort, and comfort God's children in all their trials, and to cheer them on their way to glory.

But why, out of all the innumerable company of the faithful of other generations, were these two only selected to appear with Christ here in glory?

To such a question, both Moses and Elias would doubtless at once reply: "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." But as God, in every act of his sovereignty, has good, wise, and holy reasons for his doings, he may have chosen these two from all the white-robed throng to come to Tabor because they alone of all flesh had beheld God in his all-compelling might. Before them alone he had passed in the whirlwind and in the fire. To them alone he had been revealed as the long-suffering, the merciful and gracious One.

In their earthly course, they had also been eminent types of Christ. Moses and Elias had both, like Jesus, fasted forty days and forty nights in the wilderness. Like him they had

opened heaven's storehouse to supply the people with bread. They had wrought miracles like him—they in the name of God; he in his own. Like him, they were very jealous for the honor of the Lord of hosts. Like him, they had endured shame and scorn in the delivery of their respective messages to the world. Like him, they had chosen rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. And like him, they were conveyed to the mansions of immortality in a way which exempted them from the common lot of mortals. "In all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren." And here on the holy mount, the type and the great Antitype stand face to face.

Moses and Elias appear, we conceive, on Tabor, chiefly in their *representative* character.

Moses the representative of the law; Elias the representative of the prophets. The Jews divided their Scriptures into two great parts—the law and the prophets; and here Moses appears in behalf of the one, and Elias in behalf of the other.

Moses in behalf of the law. He who had been dead about 1,500 years, and who had

been employed as the first penman to write the volume of inspiration ; he who had desolated Egypt, turning its waters into blood and smiting it with all plagues until it was utterly laid waste ; he who had led the chosen people of God out of the land of their bondage, whose face shone on Horeb with a reflected splendor when the law was proclaimed on Sinai, and convulsed nature attested the presence of God—Moses, into whose hands had been given the law, as it came fresh from the finger of God written on two tables of stone, and who had been the mediator, on that occasion, between God and his people—Moses, who had spoken and written and prophesied of Christ and his decease while upon the earth—Moses, the enforcer of the moral law, which showed that man must die if its commands were not fulfilled—Moses, the giver of the ceremonial law, which showed that, through the shedding of blood, there might be remission of sin—even this Moses himself has come, and points to Christ about to die at Jerusalem as “the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth”—even this Moses has appeared to minister to that holy One in whom was the fulfilment of all the institutions of the

law—to lay down all his authority at the feet of Jesus, to testify to his Messiahship, and to give homage to him as the world's great Lawgiver whose commands must be obeyed, and the Redeemer by whom only man can be saved. Yes, this deliverer out of Egypt, this great lawgiver in the wilderness, this mediator between God and a rebellious people, has come to bear testimony to a greater Deliverer from a worse calamity, to the Mediator of a better covenant, and to the Founder of a nobler and complete law.

He who had once for the sake of Christ, turned his back upon Egypt, “esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt,” now looked upon that very Saviour who was once but dimly discerned by his faith, and as he looked, he surely must have felt that he had done well in the sacrifice of all that Egypt could offer, and that for him indeed there was a “great recompense of reward.”

Oh, if it could have been desired that any one should come down from heaven to bear such testimony to Jesus, who so fit as Moses? Considering the prejudices of the Jews in his favor, and the mistakes into which even Chris-

tians fall respecting the law, it was both most suitable and most instructive for Moses himself to come and give his testimony to Jesus of whom he wrote. And hence here we find him, passing over the altar, and over the temple, and over the types, and standing on another mount than that of Sinai, with Christ himself, and to speak with Christ and of his decease.

Close by the side of the great legislator of the house of Abraham, stands *Elias*—that prophet of a mystical name, that prince among the prophets, the representative of all ancient prophecy—to show that all the prophecies meet and mingle and are magnified in Christ.

Elias had been translated about nine hundred years. He had stood conspicuous among the prophets, not by his writings, but by his works. He sat on Carmel and vindicated the absolute supremacy of Jehovah among the revolted tribes of Samaria. He had destroyed by fire called down from heaven the bands of fifties with their captains who had attempted to hurt him. He had restored the worship of the only true God when almost the whole land of Israel was overspread with idolatry ; and while so many worshipped Baal, he had lived

in faith on that Saviour which was to come. He had prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not upon the earth for three years and six months; and he had been miraculously taken from earth, in a chariot of fire and horses of fire, to the presence of the Almighty.

He too has come, in the name and as the representative of *the goodly fellowship of the prophets*, to give honor to the transfigured Saviour, and to give testimony to Jesus as their Saviour and their Lord. He has come to declare that “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy;” to talk of his decease as the great theme of all prophetic scriptures, “for to Him gave all the prophets witness;” and to show that in him all their predictions meet and prophecies centre, and that before him all prophets, first and last, must bow.

Here then was Moses, the founder of the law and a prince among legislators; and Elias, whose whole life was an enforcement of that law, and who was a prince among the prophets—both appearing at the levée of their Sovereign; to bear united testimony to the superior dignity of Him whose dispensation was to be one of “grace and truth,” and to lay down

their office at the feet of the Messiah, who, though now moving in humiliation on the earth, and working with all patience a work of suffering and self-denial, was none other than the appointed Deliverer who had been typified by the sacrifices of the law, and celebrated in the strains of the prophets.

And thus the law points with the finger of Moses, and all the prophets point with the finger of Elijah to "the Lamb of God" as the great substance of the foreshadowings of the law, as the great Echo of the promises of prophecy, as the woman's seed who should bruise the serpent's head—the great Messiah, the glory of his people Israel.

As we linger then on the summit of the holy mount, and gaze on Moses, and Elias, and Jesus, respectively representing the law, the prophets, and the new covenant, are we not impressed with the thought that this scene on Tabor is eminently fitted to teach that there has been throughout harmony in all the dealings of God with his people—that the Old and New Testaments are one; that types and shadows have met in Christ; that every victim which was commanded to be slain, and every prophecy that had been breathed, bore

a reference to Jesus, and found a fulfilment in Him and in his work.

The types, shadows, ceremonies, and prophecies of the Old Testament may appear to the unskilful eye and to the unpractised hand like the different disjointed parts of a clock, without object, meaning, or design ; but as, when put together, each in its own place, it is found that there is one grand design—that all are moving and combine to intimate the hour of the day—so when we hear the great epochal hour of heaven and earth strike, “It is finished,” we learn what a great and magnificent preparation was made for great and magnificent results.

Moses the lawgiver, and Elias the prophet came to testify that in Him, who was the glory of Tabor, all was fulfilled ; giving us thereby the strong assurance that salvation has all along been attainable through one and only one channel, whether shadowed forth in the mystic ritual, or beheld in the vision of seers, or scattered in the grand figures of poetry—that the same deliverance has been proposed to the nations, a deliverance through the blood and righteousness of a Surety who died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.

If we would learn that Christ “came not to destroy the law or the prophets ; that he came not to destroy, but to fulfil ;” that the patriarchal and Levitical dispensations were introductory to the Christian—harbingers to the full light of gospel day—we have only to let our eye rest on Tabor when tenanted for a night by these glorious worthies, Moses, Elias, and Christ ; listen for a little to their converse, and then behold Moses and Elias departing, thereby confessing the supremacy of Jesus ; and henceforth we see no man save Jesus only.

God’s truth is an indestructible and unchanging unity throughout all periods of time. Christ was preached in the legal types, and embodied in each prophetic vision, so that by calling Moses and Elias to converse with him, Jesus virtually put a seal to their united testimony ; and he says, as it were, to his disciples on the mount, and to us in the vale, “Ye believe in the precepts of the law and in the writings of the prophets ; and in all this ye do well, for they are they which testify of me. I was the life of that uplifted serpent. I was the water from that smitten rock. I was the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and

not man. I was the fountain opened for the people's sins. I was the devoted victim on whom should be laid the iniquity of all. I am the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, and Moses and Elias were only sent to prepare my way before me."

The law being "a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things," was in the fulness of time to be done away; and hence, when the disciples "lifted up their eyes, they saw no man save Jesus only." There was no Moses, no Elias. They had borne their willing testimony, and departed, leaving Christ the sole and all-sufficient object of confidence, adoration, and love. Moses had laid up his rod. The moth had consumed the prophetic mantle of Elijah, the Saviour of all the ends of the earth had come, and Christ was to be all in all.

Thus in the presence of Moses and Elias—representatives of the law and the prophets—the gospel is established. They both confess Him whom they typified and predicted. The peculiar offices of both have ceased. The Old Testament economy has vanished, like Moses when he died on Mount Nebo, or like Elijah when he disappeared from the earth. But

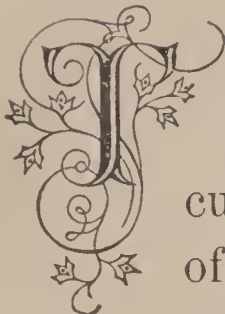
they still do homage to Christ, attest his Messiahship in purpose and spirit, and reappear in the gospel more bright and luminous than before. Oh, how they exalt and extol Jesus. Surely this is He of whom Moses and the prophets did write—the Son of God, the King of Israel.

LUKE 9:30, 31: "And behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: who appeared in glory."

IX.

THEIR GLORIOUS APPEARANCE.

“Palms of glory, raiment bright,
Crowns that never fade away,
Gird and deck the saints in light,
Priests and kings and conquerors they.”

HE reappearance of the departed has excited the curiosity and occupied a place in the superstitions of mankind in every age. And so wrought upon have the minds of the weak and ignorant occasionally been by the arts of imposture, that some have imagined they saw the forms of the dead before them, and heard warnings and counsels from their lips. But the circumstances in which such things are said to have occurred, and the communications supposed to have been made, were either so trifling or so limited in their object, as to stamp the whole with the seal of delusion. Who can imagine that God would permit a soul to depart even for a season from the abodes of the lost, or to leave the mansions of the blessed, merely to excite idle

terror, or to gratify vain curiosity? There is nothing, however, in the appearance of Moses and Elias on the holy mount to awaken our suspicion. The reality of the appearance of these heaven-appointed delegates is unquestionable, and the object of their visit to earth was in all respects worthy the wisdom and love of Jehovah. The persons were most illustrious, and the subject of conversation the most important that can occupy the mind of men or angels. Moses the lawgiver puts his rod into Jesus' hand, Elijah spreads over him his mantle, and both these honor him as their Lord and resign their authority to him; so that we, in the full assurance of faith, can say, as Philip said to Nathanael, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth the Son of Joseph." Here then is *a true vision of departed saints*.

Fifteen centuries had run their course since the unknown grave in the valley of Moab closed upon the body of the illustrious lawgiver, and nine hundred years since Elijah the prophet, without seeing death, ascended to heaven in the chariot of fire and the horses of fire. But these centuries had not impaired

the energies of these noble worthies, nor weakened their interest in earth. They are here on this mountain now, not only, as we considered in the last chapter, as representatives of the law and the prophets, but here also as *representatives of those myriads of the old church who had reached their celestial homes*; here, to give us an insight into the invisible world, to assure us of the existence of the departed good, to afford us pregnant suggestions of things beyond the grave, to open for us a little the door of heaven, that we may see a “great multitude which no man can number that are before the throne, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.” They are here to *show us an illustration of the dead who shall be raised, and of the living who shall be changed at the coming of Christ in glory.*

In the fourth chapter of the first epistle to the Thessalonians there is given the most detailed account that Scripture affords of the wondrous manifestations of the last day. In the sixteenth verse of that chapter we read: “The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ”—those beloved ones who have de-

parted in the faith, whose spirits are now in joy and felicity with God, but whose bodies are now mouldering in the grave—these, the dead in Christ, “shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” The raised believing dead and the changed believing living will then form the great vision of departed saints.

Of the raised believing dead, Moses appears before us on the holy mount as a beautiful illustration. In the book of Deuteronomy we are told that Moses was to go up to Mount Nebo, and die there; and in the fifth verse of the thirty-fourth chapter it is recorded: “So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor”—his death and burial are both mentioned—“but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.” Jude in his epistle records: “Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.” If

there is no certainty here, may we not innocently suppose, when we are speaking of Moses' appearance as a mere illustration, that the controversy between Michael the archangel and the devil had reference to this appearance of Moses on Tabor? When the honor of appearing on the mount of Transfiguration was about to be conferred upon the meek and beloved Moses, the servant of God, and "Michael the archangel"—for it is "the voice of the archangel and the trump of God that shall raise the dead"—was sent for that body to be present as an illustration of the raised dead in Christ, the devil disputed with him, urging probably that Christ had not got possession of the keys of death, for he had not himself overcome death by rising again from the sepulchre; thus endeavoring to keep possession of the dead body, so that it might not become a witness to Christ's power, an evidence of hope to the living, and a glorious messenger from heaven to cheer the Saviour on his way to the grave.

We know indeed that Christ is spoken of as "the first-fruits of them that sleep," and so he is "*the first-fruits*"—as the sheaf that was waved before the Lord and offered to

him ere the harvest commenced. But there was provision made by the law for "plucking a handful," an ear with the hand, ere even the first-fruits were reaped. And so might not Moses for a special purpose have been gathered, as it were, with the hand, and brought in and presented on Tabor as an earnest of the raised and glorified dead, when Christ shall come to be glorified in his saints and to be admired in all them that believe?

But whether it was the body which God buried in the valley of Moab over against Beth-peor, or a body which God prepared for him, and permitted him to assume for the present occasion, as at various times he had allowed angels to do, this much we know, that Moses died as other men die, and that he was buried, and that he now appears in glory, and that his appearance is a beautiful illustration of those saints who are to come up from the grave and stand with Christ in a reanimated, spiritual, and glorious form.

But Elias is also here. And may we not say that he is present as a fit illustration of those who shall be alive, and remain at the coming of the Lord, and who shall never die?

Elijah, you remember, never tasted death.

There came chariots of fire and horses of fire, and the body and spirit of the prophet passed undivided into heaven. His body was not consigned to the dishonors of corruption, but was changed, as those of all living will be, when Christ comes to judgment. Hence we may regard him as portraying to us those saints who, living when Christ shall appear, shall be changed without seeing corruption. He came with his own body, which had been spiritualized when he ascended, to receive his gracious reward, and with Moses he thus “appeared in glory.”

What a miniature then have we here on Tabor of that august scene in unmeasured magnificence, which is yet to be witnessed, not only by Peter and James and John, but by an assembled universe. The buried saints shall be raised, while those that are alive and remain shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. This is the grand consummation for which God’s people have ever looked, and the expectation of which Paul, in that passage to which we have already referred, reminds the Thessalonians was the best solace when death made its entrance into

their households. And if the grave shall thus yield up the dust of the righteous, so that all who have gone hence in the faith of the Redeemer shall start from their long slumbers, and welcome their Master as he comes to bestow the long-promised gracious reward ; and if, at the same instant of time, believers, who are yet wearing on earth a body of corruption, shall undergo a change from mortality to immortality, and receive imperishable bodies as they mount to meet their King—then in Moses and Elias, who stood with Christ in the hour of transfiguration, we have a most accurate illustration of that glorified community, gathered from the dead and the living, which shall be summoned around the Redeemer when he comes to the judgment.

These heavenly visitants, we are told, “*appeared in glory.*” They had come from heaven, and though their honor and felicity there were unspeakable, they felt no reluctance to descend to this mountain. They were not called to relinquish their splendor, or to conceal it with a veil, as our Lord is said to have “emptied himself” when he appeared in our world. How great the glory which encircled them, when it was visible even

amid the brightness spread around our Lord ! But the more splendid their glory, the more honorable to Him to whom they did obeisance. Nothing is recorded in Holy Writ of the splendor of the heavenly messengers who ministered to the Saviour in his temptation in the wilderness or in his agony in the garden, but those who came to give him pledges of glory on the holy mount, and to call him forth from the grave on the morning of his resurrection, are described as having countenances like lightning, and raiment white as snow. Moses and Elias appear in human form, but that form is adorned with the lustre and filled with the power of immortality. It is the glory of their exalted nature, not equal indeed to that of the Redeemer, but heightened by the reflection of his splendor, and sufficient to satisfy their desires as immortal beings. The radiant smiles that illumine their countenances, the garments of light that envelop their forms, tell of some other world than this. They have come from the world of spirits, that holy, happy region where none but such dwell. They are of the company of the spirits of the just made perfect. How bright, how immortal they look ! They have waxed not old,

neither have they decayed, though so many centuries have elapsed since they took their departure from this earth. Their corruptible has put on incorruption, and their mortal put on immortality, and they shine as the sun in the kingdom of our Father. *And if Moses and Elias descended* from their glory, in order to visit and do honor to Jesus, would not the whole company of prophets, the whole army of martyrs, every saint of every age, the whole host of heaven, if permitted by their God, have gladly come down to bow at the feet of the same Saviour, and to adore him whom angels are commanded to worship?

Oh, if heaven sends forth its best sons to do Jesus honor, will not earth give him honor too? There is not one in that land of perfect light and love who would not cast his crown at Jesus' feet, and who would not fly to do his pleasure on the wings of immortality. And yet there are many on earth who cast dishonor on his name, refuse to own him as their Lord, and shrink from confessing him before men. Oh, let these words of the transfigured Lord sink deep into every heart: "He that is ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when

he cometh in his glory, and that of the holy angels." On that glorious day he will raise the bodies of his saints, publicly own them for his people, and put them in full possession of eternal life. Yes, no matter who you are, if you are Christ's ransomed one, and no matter where your dead dust may lie, God will watch over it, and keep it safe till Christ comes to judgment. He knows how to gather his own elect. Let the whirlwind bear away the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof; let the people mourn and search for the lost sepulchre of Moses; both will gladly appear at the bidding of Him who gave them eternal life, and to him at last shall the gathering of his people be.

But let us bear in mind that if we would appear like Moses and Elias in glory on that day, we must not let this "vile body" sink our spirits to the dust, and thus deprive us of a glorious immortality. Our very body, if we are Christ's, like that of Moses and Elias, is designed by Christ for the noblest allotments. Let us not defile and dishonor the members, hereafter to be arrayed in glory, by yielding them as instruments of unrighteousness. Let us stand side by side with

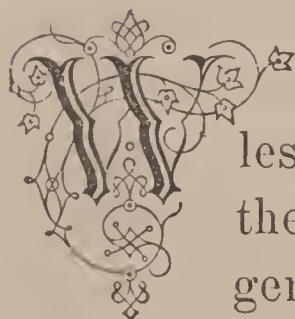
Moses and Elias on the holy mount, as they appear in glory, and see how sin has deformed and degraded us. Our bodies were not made to grovel in the dust. Like our souls, they long for immortality. Let us seek to shake off, then, even from our body, every trace of transgression, and pray for grace to withstand those appetites and desires which prove us vile and corruptible.

As we gaze upon Tabor, and see men of like passions with ourselves there in glory, we must resolve, by the grace of God, that, though the earth for a time may become the sepulchre of our body, our body will never become the sepulchre of our soul; that we will present it, even now, to God a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable in his sight, which is our reasonable service; that when Christ comes "in his glory," it may awake and sing to the honor of him who redeemed it with his blood, and hath wholly conformed it to his own glorious body.

X.

THE LESSONS OF THEIR APPEAR- ANCE.

“Lo, darkness and doubt are now flying away,
No longer I roam in conjecture forlorn ;
So breaks on the traveller, faint and astray,
The bright and the balmy effulgence of morn.
See truth, love, and mercy in triumph ascending,
And nature all glowing in Eden’s first bloom !
On the cold cheek of death smiles and roses are blending,
And beauty immortal awakes from the tomb.”



WE have already hinted at some lessons which may be gathered from the visit of these heavenly messengers to Jesus on the holy mount ; and there are a few others upon which it may be profitable for us to meditate as a confirmation of our faith and an encouragement to our hope.

If these events on the mount of Transfiguration were *real*, as every thing connected with the narrative goes to attest, *there must be a future state for those who pass from this world.*

Man, we are assured in God’s word, is not

like the beast which perisheth. He has an immortal nature, which must endure for ever. When this dust returns to the earth as it was, the soul returns to God who gave it. Enoch and Elijah were translated that they should not see death. The former in the patriarchal, and the latter in the Mosaic dispensation, that men under each dispensation might have an ocular demonstration of the passage of humanity to another and higher sphere. This fact, recorded of two of our race, is the pledge of a truth respecting them all. It is the testimony that God would give us to the existence of departed men. The pleasing hope, the fond desire, the longing after immortality, experienced by the heathen philosopher, is established as a *fact* to every reader of God's word. The translation of Enoch and Elijah was a practical demonstration of man's immortality. And here on the holy mount, Moses and Elijah now appear: the former who had passed through the gates of death into the invisible, and the latter the occupant of a fiery chariot that bore him heavenward; showing that no matter how the transit is made from this world, there is a future for humanity; and showing, too, that those who have left this

world not only exist, but exist in the conscious exercise of all their powers. What a mighty confirmation we have here of the immortality of the soul!

For ages upon ages the cry had gone forth: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." "Was this spoken of the soul?" This, in the main, was the query of the old heathen philosophers, and indeed of all alive to their own character and nature. Century followed century as year followed year, gathering in their course the good and the great of every nation and of every land, and buried them in the earth. And yet no light, no solution of the ever-present and ever-pressing question came. Of the countless numbers who had left the world since it was started in its orbit, not one had ever returned, nor had any communication been received from them by the earth. Gazing over the broad ocean, or far away into the blue depths of space, many and many an awakened spirit thus had asked:

"When that vast sun shall veil his golden light
 Deep in the gloom of everlasting night—
 When wild destruction's flame shall wrap the skies—
 When Chaos triumphs, and when Nature dies—
 Shall *man* alone the wreck of worlds survive?
 'Midst falling spheres, shall he immortal live?"

Nature had been studied; and from the rising sap, and from the budding leaf and bloom of spring, it had been *inferred* that man *may* awaken to newness of life, and arise to similar beauty and splendor. Man's inner being had been questioned, and from its sanctuary there had come the impression that mortal shall put on immortality; else, "why shrinks the soul back on herself, and startles at destruction?" But the teachings of nature, the deductions of reason, the impressions of the conscience had never been confirmed. They were at best but probabilities, not certainties; dreams or hopes, not facts. How glad therefore we should be to have the fact of a separate future state established on such testimony as that given to us on the holy mount.

Moses indeed had not spoken of it fully in his writings; nor, as the object of religious hope, is it to be found in the exhortations of Elijah. Of course it is contained in the teachings of both, as we learn from the words addressed to the rich man in torment: "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them." But now all doubt is removed. In this vision on Tabor the blessed truth is brought out—a living, patent, substantial re-

ality. Peter and James and John have evidence which their eyes can see and ears verify, that all true believers in Christ, after being removed from this visible scene, whether borne away by a whirlwind in a chariot of fire, or laid by angel hands in some undiscovered sepulchre, *do in very deed* LIVE ON—live in glory, live in blessedness, live to take an interest in the concerns of that world that gave them birth and where they toiled and wept and fought, live to discourse with the blessed Jesus, and to “see him as he is.” Two resplendent forms, who had passed away from earth, had come to commune with Jesus. They are Moses and Elias. In their celestial bodies, they illumine the mount; and they speak with Jesus in language known to the disciples. Let us not be ignorant then, brethren, concerning them which are asleep in Christ; neither let us sorrow as those who have no hope. The dead do live. Immortality is the destiny of man.

Again, in this bright scene on Tabor, we have an evidence of *the resurrection of the body*.

We have glanced at this truth already; but it seems to claim a more extended notice,

as it is one which not only excites our curiosity, but encourages our hearts.

With many people the resurrection of the body is a dead letter in their creed. They have an almost Athenian contempt for the doctrine. "It is a thing incredible with them that God should raise the dead." They have no idea of a risen body, except as a gross and perishable thing, fettered by the conditions of this animal economy, which, while we are in the flesh, is the source to us of so much disquietude and of so much sin. But there is no truth in God's word which we should not cherish; and no testimony to that truth which we should not seek to understand; and no doctrine taught on the blessed page of God's own book, that we should not believe, and upon which we should not permit our faith to feed.

Here then, after an interval of many centuries, Moses appears with a *body*, and Elias appears with a *body*. In that unknown grave over against Baal-peor all that was mortal of the great lawgiver has developed and quickened into a new organization—an organization upon which no worm can feed, and which no corruption can waste. And in that brief transition from earth to heaven, at the instant, it

may be, of his setting foot into his gorgeous equipage of fire, the body of Elijah became fashioned into a glorious body, causing all that was corruptible, earthly, and unlovely to drop off, even as his mantle fell from him to the ground. Here then we have a proof of the glory of the resurrection body of the good: “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” The appearance of Moses and Elias on the transfiguration mount was a sample of the glorified saints in heaven. “Who shall change,” says Paul in speaking of the Saviour, “our vile body”—*change* it; not destroy it, not annihilate it, not absorb it into a pure spiritualism—but refine it, sublimate it, recast it into some new mould of being—a form like that of the glorified Son of God. The members shall be as the Head. The children shall be as the Heir—their vile bodies purified; fashioned like unto his glorious body, at whose superhuman brightness the disciples were sore afraid.

On the Tabor which is above, in the bright transfigurations of the last day, there shall appear not Moses and Elias only, not Peter and

James and John only, but all who have believed on Jesus through their word ; their countenances shining as the sun, their raiment all white as the light, and all talking with Jesus—not of his sufferings merely, but of his triumphs ; not of his dying pains, but of his risen glory—a glory which they and we shall both behold and share.

By this vision upon the mount, we seem to be assured also *that in the life of the world to come we shall know each other*. We think it proves that our knowledge of individuals will be retained in heaven. Peter and James and John did not see two unknown messengers from the spirit-land. They saw Moses as Moses, and Elias as Elias. We are not told by what means the disciples arrived at a knowledge of their present identity, but the evangelic narrative supposes that they *had* this knowledge, and the great purposes of the transfiguration would not have been answered without it.

The disciples might have gained the knowledge that it was Moses and Elias who were now appearing in glory before them, by hearing the conversation between Jesus and these heavenly visitants, in the course of which ref-

erences to *each* of their histories may have been made, as they “spake of the decease which Jesus should accomplish at Jerusalem;” or, during their ascent of the mountain, Jesus may have instructed the disciples that some such visit as this might be expected. But however they acquired the knowledge, the fact is unquestionable, that they knew these men in shining garments to be Moses and Elias; giving us the assurance that we shall know each other in the life that is to come. Dives “saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.” And the same recognition which augments the bitterness of hell will sweeten the blessedness and joys of heaven. What an animating and comforting thing it is, as we stand over the grave of our departed, to know that there will be blessed recognitions in heaven; that when we awake from the deep slumbers of the grave, and are caught up with Jesus to the mount of uncreated glory, not only shall we behold patriarchs on their thrones, and prophets by the altar, and elders as they bow, and the apostles as they cry aloud; but we shall see those whom we knew on earth—shall be permitted to embrace our children and our friends again with all the

fervor of a pure and spiritual and everlasting love. The relative that we prayed for will be there; the erring sinner whom we rescued will be there. The attached flock shall behold there the face of their faithful minister, while the pastor shall be there to see his "joy and crown of rejoicing." Without recognitions in the heavenly state there would be no friendly ties and no love of saints one to another. But God is love; heaven is love. "Charity never faileth." Our earthly attachments, like our earthly bodies, shall not be destroyed, but purified. All in them that is unfit for heaven will be taken away; the rest will remain. We shall have our friendships there, deep without passion, fond without infirmity, tranquil because undisturbed by rival regards, and happy because they can be dissolved no more. Language is too weak and imagination too poor to portray, or even to conceive, the intimacy of intercourse, the promptness of communication, and the sympathy of feeling, we shall enjoy in heaven, where all our duties and employments shall dispose us to love, where doubts and suspicions never can enter, where affections never grow cold, and where the very atmosphere we breathe is love.

And may we not learn this lesson also from the employment of these heavenly visitants on that holy mount: that we shall have some mode by which we can interchange ideas in heaven? Moses and Elias *talked* with Jesus. The thought of a *silent* world is insupportable. But how grand the idea of a glorious place, where praise only breaks the silence, where nothing jars with the melody of the eternal chime, where the roll of the pealing hallelujahs is like the voice of many waters, where every one hath a song, every one a story of deliverance, every one hath a tribute of thanksgiving to free, sovereign, unmerited grace, and yet in which every one refers his blessing to the "decease which Jesus accomplished at Jerusalem." Such a place is the future, the eternal home of all God's children. And how clear is the light which this vision sheds over the certainty, the employments, the glory, and pleasures of that heavenly state.

Blessed be God, we are not left to form our ideas of futurity from the wild and sensual follies of heathenism, nor from the deductions of reason, which are limited and unsatisfactory, but from the revelations made by

Him with whom are the words of eternal life.

Behold then, in this scene, two departed saints in the possession of all the powers of soul and body in a state of perfection, capable of every service, and blessed with their Saviour's joy. These are pledges of the glory of the righteous, and in them we may behold what we in due time shall be, if we are the disciples of Jesus. We too shall "appear in glory," and then we shall talk with Jesus, and address to his ear the anthem of gratitude: "Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood;" while his communications to us will fill us with light, our hearts with love, and our whole being with rapturous wonder. There that question, too, which has often perplexed us on earth shall be fully answered: "Shall we know each other there?"—answered to the joy of our heart, for we shall see even as we are seen, and know even as we are known.

With such hopes, then, as this vision imparts, we can brave the gloom of death and the putrefaction of the grave. Christ is one with us in earthly shame and in heavenly

glory. He who is "afflicted in all our afflictions" would have us glorified in all his triumphs. If we suffer with him, he would have us reign with him. Tabor shall be ours as well as Calvary, and a crown shall grace the brow that for Jesus' sake may have been pierced with thorns.




LUKE 9 : 31 : “ And spake of his decease which he should
accomplish at Jerusalem.”

XI.

THE SUBJECT OF THEIR CONVERSE WITH JESUS.

“Oh, never, never canst thou know
What then for thee the Saviour bore ;
The pangs of that mysterious woe
Which wrung his bosom’s inmost core.
Yes, man for man perchance may brave
The horrors of the yawning grave ;
And friend for friend, or son for sire,
Undaunted and unmoved expire,
From love or piety or pride ;
But who can die as Jesus died?”

 ANY a conference of distinguished persons has been held in the history of our globe, on the decisions of whose counsels the peace of the world depended. But the annals of time present us with no assembly so august as that which was convened on Tabor, and with no conversation so profoundly interesting as that which occupied the illustrious personages who there met. Some of the heroes and legislators of profane antiquity were men of splendid name and of mighty

influence on their own time and future generations ; but they can never compare with Moses, and Elijah, and Jesus.

Here is Moses, who was saved when a child from the waters of the Nile, who was brought up in the court of the Pharaohs, and who had in prospect the throne of that land, but who left all his greatness and expectations, and cast in his lot with the afflicted people of God ; who afterwards became the leader and lawgiver of the emancipated tribes of Israel, and whose death and burial were under the immediate charge of God.

Here is Elias, who bound up the heavens so that they rained not, and who again prayed, and rain came ; the intrepid reformer, who was so distinguished among the prophets, and who was taken up to heaven without tasting death, there to enjoy eternal glory.

And here is Jesus of Nazareth, a name which is above every name ; for at that name every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess.

Of what, then, did these glorified beings speak, in their sublime and unearthly converse, each clothed in lustre, and each arrayed in the splendor of immortality ? Their theme

surely must be far beyond the character of ordinary events: some mighty movement in the inscrutable plans of mysterious Providence; some astonishing and untried scheme in the purposes of the Divine administration, and in displaying God's unspeakable love and condescension to man. On what, think you, can such a glorious trio speak, if not on such majestic themes as the glories, the thrones, the sceptres, the palaces of that everlasting kingdom which the Mediator shall set up, and which he shall share with his saints? a subject joyous, cheering, hopeful, bright as the bright scene around them. Or was their discourse of the glory Christ had with the Father when he spoke worlds into being, and bade the new-made sun to drive away darkness from the face of the deep? Or was it of the impatient joy with which the high hosts of heaven were awaiting his return to the sanctuary of immortality? No, such were not fitting themes for a time of exaltation transient as this. The converse of the heavenly visitants with Christ was of *his approaching sufferings, the dark hour of agony, the raging thirst, the cries and faintings of redemption's finished work*. If the assembly on Tabor had

been a conclave of the wise and the mighty and the noble of the earth, they would likely have selected something regarding the fate of battles, the revolution of empires, or the proud ascendancy of earthly and ambitious conquest. But these celestial nobles did not speak even of Christ's temporal glory, nor did they dwell on the many crowns which were reserved for him to wear when the kingdoms of this world should become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. They could only speak of his *death*, the death of their incarnate Lord. To that death they owed their heavenly glory, and with it were identified all their hopes. They did not come from heaven to tell Jesus any thing of its details. He knew them all. They came to learn from him something respecting it. The very angels looked into it with eager curiosity, anxious to know what that death might signify. So did these two glorified ones come to ask Jesus of that death which he was to endure for sinners, and to feast their souls while meditating on the surpassing love, the incomparable wisdom, and inexorable justice which were to occupy them to all eternity.

It may seem strange that in this hour of

triumph there should be any mention of humiliation; that just at the moment when the diadem of conquest was on Immanuel's head, they should have referred to the crown of thorns by which it must be circled; that while his face was shining as the sun, they should have spoken of that countenance as spit upon and buffeted; that while his raiment was white and beautiful as the light, they should have made any reference to those robes with which impious men, in scorn and mockery, would array him.

And yet it was not strange; for it was by the shame and the anguish, the insult and the death, that the Captain of our salvation accomplished his great work, discomfited the hosts of fallen angels, and unriveted the chains by which man had been bound as an alien to God.

To converse, therefore, with Jesus about this, was like speaking to a mighty Potentate of resistless armies, of splendid fleets, and of the unmeasured resources which assure him of the mastery of the world. To converse with Christ about his cross, was to speak of the mysterious but overwhelming weapons which should hew down those enemies which

would destroy the universe. To speak of the shedding of his blood, was to speak of him treading the wine-press alone with a Conqueror's step, and destroying the evil that had desecrated the works of his hand. No wonder, then, that in this hour of triumph these delegates from glory should mention his humiliation, for even in heaven the marks of shame upon the Saviour are the insignia of honor. In that glowing description of the Apocalypse, the Saviour, you will remember, is exhibited in the midst of the throne as a Lamb that was slain; as if he still showed his wounds, and still retained his scars. *He conquered by dying;* and hence the marks of the nails and of the spear will be for ever his most splendid decoration. And when you remember that every sacrifice under the law was to find its Antitype in the sacrifice of Calvary, and every prediction delivered by the prophets required for its fulfilment that Christ should die as the substitute of man, you cannot fail to perceive that Moses and Elias, coming forward as the representatives of the law and the prophets, could find no such fit subject for conversation as the agony and death of the Redeemer.

Are you disappointed in the subject of discourse between the glorious ones who have met on the sacred mount? If you are, I fear you have not the Spirit of Christ nor the mind of Christ. If you cannot see any of the bearings which that wondrous topic which occupied their thoughts has on the grand and extensive scheme of God's moral government; if you cannot perceive any of the distinguishing glories it throws around the divine character; and if you cannot feel any thing of the inseparable connection which it has with the salvation of a lost world, then pray God to anoint your eyes with heavenly eye-salve, that you may see and understand, and not undervalue the great themes of God and of his Christ.

Whatever importance other subjects may have in the estimation of men, they are not worthy to be compared with the "decease which Jesus accomplished at Jerusalem." It was the decease of the most extraordinary person that ever died. Sinning angels have died. They lost the life of God that was in them, and are now reserved in chains of darkness till the judgment of the great day. Death has passed upon all men, for all have sinned.

“Many a prince and great man has fallen.” And in a sense, death has dominion over every earthly thing, because all is under the curse; but the death of which Moses and Elias talked with Jesus was the decease neither of a man nor yet of an angel, but of the God of angels—One who is the Father’s equal and the Father’s fellow—the great God our Saviour, God over all, blessed for ever. His crucifixion was nothing less than the killing of the Prince of life.

It was the most extraordinary decease that was ever accomplished. It was such a death as no other died, and as no other could undergo. It was wonderful that the mighty God should suffer and die at all, and more wonderful still that he should have died not for the holy angels—the heavenly hosts who daily minister unto him—but for the unjust; for those who were rebels to his throne and government; who had done what they could to provoke him to anger, and were at the same time altogether hateful and offensive in the sight of a holy God.

Not only was it amazing that *He* should die, but that his decease should be so extraordinary in its severity. “Never was sorrow like unto his

sorrow," in the fullest meaning of the words. He suffered what heaven regarded as an equivalent for the sins of those for whom he died. "He was made a *curse* for us." Justice had to do in the decease of Christ what it never had to do before, either in the person suffering or in the pains suffered. It had turned angels out of heaven, and man out of Paradise, and poured fire out of heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah, and drowned the world for its iniquity ; but now it had to bruise God's own dear Son, and put him to grief, and make his soul an offering for sin ; and it spared him not.

His death was extraordinary, in that he had a full previous view of every item of misery that was to come upon him. Our sorrows are lessened by coming upon us singly, and by being concealed by the impenetrable veil of futurity. God, in great mercy, has hidden the future from our view ; but he did not hide it from Christ. He saw the whole gathering cloud, as it collected and prepared its fearful contents to burst upon him. He felt all his sorrows in the severest agony, and saw them all in the distance in the blackest coloring ; and in the hour and power of darkness, he

had not one sympathizing friend to wipe from off his cheek the dropping tear.

He had even to feel the bitterness of *this* lamentation: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

And Christ's decease was most extraordinary in the results which it produced.

The death of a distinguished leader has often been the loss of a kingdom; but Christ, by death, destroyed him that had the power of death. He went forth single-handed against all the powers of the wicked one, and giving them every advantage which the god of this world could wish, the Captain of our salvation, by one stroke, "spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross;" and "he must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet."

The death of Christ procured eternal redemption for fallen and degenerate man—deliverance from all evil here, the possession of all good hereafter, grace and glory and every good thing. And while it produced these unspeakable blessings for man, it brought glory to God. His law was magnified and made honorable, and every attribute of his

nature was made to shine resplendent in the eyes of the universe.

And think of the magnificent results of his death to Christ. He has obtained a name that is above every name. He has sat down with his Father upon his throne. He wields as Mediator the sceptre of the universe ; and he will not resign it to his Father till he has gathered in the last lamb to his fold, and brought the last saint to glory.

This was the theme upon which Moses and Elias talked with Jesus. These heavenly visitants might have conversed with each other about what they had seen and enjoyed in the heavenly country since they had taken their departure from this vale of tears ; or they might have recounted the trials they endured, the duties they discharged, or the privileges they enjoyed as they served the Lord in these outer courts. But no, it is with Jesus and what concerned him that their attention is now occupied. Nor did they talk with the disciples, for they had descended not to hold intercourse with them, but with the Master, and concerning his decease—a theme precious to their hearts, wondrous to their minds, and vast enough to task their glorified and immor-

tal powers—a theme on which glorified intellects will ponder, and for which glorified tongues will utter endless praise. The decease of Christ at Jerusalem is the great central truth of revelation. It is the theme of discourse between the good in all worlds. It is the chorus in the anthems of heaven. It is the key to unlock all the mysteries in the moral empire of God. His decease was the laying the foundation broad and deep of a magnificent temple to the Lord, the top stone of which shall be brought forth with shoutings of “Grace, grace unto it.” No event in the annals of the world is worthy of being compared with the death of Christ. It stands alone and unrivalled, a colossal monument of grace, love, mercy, righteousness, and truth. It invests the name of the Redeemer with unfading glory.

One thing more awaits our notice: the scene where this wondrous event was to happen—“the decease which he should accomplish at *Jerusalem*.” Jerusalem was to be the scene of the Saviour’s death. This was a place which had enjoyed distinguished privileges. Since the time of David it had been the chosen place of Jehovah’s residence. It was there

that Solomon built his magnificent temple, according to the Divine appointment. It was there that the temple, though inferior to Solomon's, yet a splendid house, still stood. It was there that the Divine worship was celebrated with the greatest pomp and regularity. It was there that God had often communicated to his people by his prophets what he desired them to know. And it was there that the people assembled three times a year, at the three great annual festivals.

These then were some of Jerusalem's privileges. And how fearfully they were abused is well known to every reader of sacred history. Its inhabitants in all ages had been more distinguished for their *wicked* than for their *pious* conduct. In the days of Christ their religious character was unchanged, and they were fast ripening for the terrific ruin which was to be inflicted by the Roman armies. But their cup of iniquity was not yet full. Though they had already attained to a dark preëminence in the annals of martyrdom, they had to add one stupendous murder more to the fearful catalogue of their crimes ere they became the victims of God's unmitigated and tremendous vengeance. And it was done.

Their fierce and malignant feelings were at last gratified by the ignominious death of Christ upon the cross. And this deed of blood consummated the wickedness of that devoted city. When Christ cried upon the cross, "It is finished!" he not only announced that the redemption of the world was achieved, and the gates of heaven thrown open to men of every clime and of every age, but he also sounded the knell of Jerusalem's greatness, and the approach of that hour of accumulated and frightful misery in which that proud city and its magnificent temple were to be reduced to an unsightly mass of smoking ruins. Well might the evangelic prophet exclaim, "Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt!"

Oh, let us remember Jerusalem's fate with fear and trembling. We too are chargeable with many sins and with the abuse of many privileges. Let us beware lest a day of grace give place to a season of consuming wrath.

Would, therefore, that I could interest you more deeply in that Saviour whose death is the world's life. He did not die through any necessity of his nature, but purely of *his own free-will*. The brilliant scene on Tabor is the

fullest proof that his death was voluntary. Had it not been for his yearnings of unmeasured tenderness for us, he might have overleaped the grave and ascended to his throne ; but so great was his love for us, that he freely and graciously and voluntarily went from Tabor to Gethsemane, from Gethsemane to Calvary, and from Calvary to the tomb. Behold, how he loved us !

Are you ashamed then to speak about his death ? One might suppose that if it were right to envy, we might almost envy Peter and James and John the opportunity of hearing a conversation on this theme between Christ and Moses and Elias. But we need not envy. We may read for ourselves what Moses wrote, and what Elias and all the prophets testified. We may converse in faith and prayer with Jesus. We may talk of these things with our families and friends, and through Christ we can go to heaven, and hear how patriarchs and prophets and angels and all God's glorified ones talk and sing together of these things without ceasing, and enjoy ineffable communion with God.

A closing thought ! Wonderful, extraordinary, and unparalleled as the death of

Christ was, mark how calmly and pleasingly it is spoken of: "his decease;" or, literally, his *departure*—his going out of this world into the next. Though it was accomplished in pain and ignominy, yet the language simply indicates a change of residence. If we are one with Jesus, however terrible in its circumstances death may come to us, it is thus we should contemplate our decease. Many of the true disciples of Christ trouble themselves about the *circumstances* of death, about the *diseases* which are to consume and agonize their frames, about the *pains* and *groans* and *dying* strife, about the *dissolving* of the body into dust, and all the *darkness* and *loathsome corruption* of the grave. Thus they distress themselves, and make death terrible indeed to contemplate. But death to the believer, as it was to his Lord, is but a departure to his Father's house, a passing out of a world of care and toil and suffering, into a world where he finds a delightful and everlasting home, from which sorrow and sighing are for ever fled away, and where he is "ever with the Lord."

Nor should the subject of our decease be with us a *strange* subject of meditation *in the day of our prosperity*. When all is sunny and

calm and without a cloud, then we should think of our latter end. We should think how soon we may pass from Tabor to the grave, from visions of transporting bliss to scenes of sorrow, desolation, and death, when the glistening of our raiment shall be changed into the paleness of the shroud.

It is wrong to put such a topic as this far from us in the day of prosperity, and to cherish the delusion that "the fashion of the world" shall never pass away, that its treasures shall never fade, and that its fine gold shall never change.

Christ did not so bear prosperity. He knew that the glory of Tabor would soon pass, and that a sunless desolateness of soul would succeed, where the very light would be as darkness. We should not be afraid, in our day of brightness, to speak of our decease; nor when we are contemplating our treasures, to think how soon the time will come when all we can ask either friend or foe to give us, will be a narrow slip of our parent earth for a mansion and a resting-place. We shall not dig our grave by thinking of it, nor hasten our decease by talking of it; but it will enable us to bear with more humility the brightness of Tabor,


to remember the decease which we shall soon have to accomplish. Let us live then in Jesus, live with Jesus, live like Jesus, and our decease will be a peaceful transit from one world to another. It will be a passing from a lower chamber to a higher. It will be a falling asleep in Jesus. We shall go hence and be at rest.

LUKE 9 : 32 : “ But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep : and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him.”

XII.

THE SLEEPERS AND THEIR LOSS.

“Awake, my soul, in joyful lays,
And sing thy great Redeemer’s praise;
He justly claims a song from thee:
His loving-kindness, oh, how free!”

 HE human heart cries for sympathy, and the heart of Christ, the God-man, was no exception. The glory of the transfiguration, the visit, and the conversation of the heavenly attendants were preparatory to the decease. As Jesus was strengthened by an angel from heaven in Gethsemane’s agony, so was he strengthened by the presence and conversation of Moses and Elias as he looked forward to the dreadful scenes that were looming in the hourly-lessening distance. And is it not sweet to be the succorer of the tempted, the consoler of the distressed, the strengthener of the weak, and a minister to those who are appointed to die? How eagerly must Moses and Elias have embraced the opportunity of com-

ing to earth to cheer, by their sympathy and interest in his work, their Redeemer and ours! And how the joys of the upper world would be deepened as Moses and Elias, on their return, would repeat their conversation with the transfigured Saviour! Alas, that there should be such apathy respecting all that concerns the Saviour on the earth! Why should there be one dull ear, or inattentive mind, or sleepy frame, as we repeat the story of the decease that was accomplished at Jerusalem—a decease from which flow streams of life and salvation to those who are ready to perish? On that sacred mount, illuminated with the glory of the Lord and privileged with delegates from the court of heaven, from that “land that is very far off,” and who are engaged in earnest conversation with the transfigured Jesus, all must be attention on the part of the disciples as this glorious conversation proceeds. They must be hanging on the lips of the speakers, drinking in every word, with their feelings stirred to their very depths, and with their hearts burning within them. How sad that we should find from the records of imperishable truth that “Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep.”

It might have been considered almost impossible that, with such persons present and such a theme discussed, and amid such glory, they should have yielded to this weakness of our nature and become "heavy with sleep"—asleep when they might have been listening to a conversation that would have removed their ignorance, corrected their errors, enlightened their understanding, strengthened their faith, and brightened their hopes—asleep when they might have been gazing on the glory of Christ, and hearing of that decease which was to be their life, and which was to open for them the gates to glory. Such are we.

Christ exhibited to these three disciples his highest glory on Tabor, and his lowest abasement in Gethsemane, and on both occasions he found them sleeping—sleeping when he was before them in his agony, and sleeping when he was before them in his triumph. Nothing, one would think, could have been more affecting to these disciples than the glories and the agonies of their Master; yet neither the one nor the other could keep them awake. They may indeed on this occasion have been overpowered with the glorious

{ splendor, or they may have been weary with watching through the night; but whatever may have been the cause, their drowsy frame was a sad evidence of the weakness and frailty of human nature, even after it has become the subject of God's renewing grace.

It is not meant to be affirmed, for the phraseology of the narrative does not warrant the affirmation, that these favored disciples were so overwhelmed with sleep throughout the scene that was presented on the mount as to render them incompetent witnesses of the glorious transaction; but the language does seem to imply and teach, that at some point in the vision they were overcome with slumber, and that during that sleeping time they were deprived of witnessing and of hearing more or less of the wondrous manifestations which might have been theirs to enjoy, had they been so exercised and interested as to cause sleep to depart from them. They do not record for our instruction any thing which they did not see, nor any thing which they did not hear. They do not give us the dream of three sleeping disciples, nor do they write a description of the phantasma of their own heated imagination; but they record what

they saw and heard when they were awake. It was "when they were awake they saw the glory of Jesus and the two men who were with him." How much more of that glory they might have seen, and how much more of that heavenly converse between Jesus and the celestial visitants they might have heard, if they had kept awake throughout, we cannot tell.

But whatever they did deprive themselves of was both their loss and ours. Their weakness and frailty, and their consequent loss, have this lesson for us: the great need which the best of men have to pray to God for quickening grace, to make them not only alive, but lively in God's service. How important that exhortation of the Saviour in the garden of Gethsemane: "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." For if these three disciples, whom Paul calls "pillars" in the church, were unable to watch with Christ one hour, how much need have we to guard against spiritual lethargy and drowsiness, particularly when we are with God on the mount! How many blessed visions, which God may have prepared for us in the sanctuary, may have passed unseen and unimproved, because we were

“heavy with sleep,” perhaps that worst form of sleep, the sleep with open eyes, the sleep of the soul! And yet is it not worthy of note, that no word of reproof is recorded as escaping from the Master’s lips, though his favorite disciples were sleeping amid the glories of Tabor? And in the garden of Gethsemane, where these same disciples slept again during the agony of the Saviour, he merely said, “What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Thus does the Saviour bear with our infirmities. No sooner does the reproof escape him for their untimely slumbers, than he strives to heal the wound which his words may have inflicted. “He remembers that we are dust.” But, blessed be God, this dust is not a part of our everlasting portion. We shall be delivered from the burden of this flesh, and our willing spirit set free, shall be in joy and felicity. We shall be without a fetter and without a clog. We shall be active and devoted in heaven, never tired with its work, and never wearied with its enjoyments.

MATT. 17:4: "Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias."

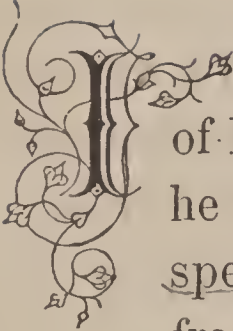
MARK 9:5, 6: "And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid."

LUKE 9:33: "And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said."

XIII.

PETER'S PROPOSITION.

“Once I thought my mountain strong,
Firmly fixed, no more to move;
Then my Saviour was my song;
Then my soul was filled with love.
Those were happy, golden days,
Sweetly spent in prayer and praise.”

T is difficult to collect the thoughts of Peter from the words he used when he awoke and beheld the supernatural spectacle. They seem to indicate both frailty and piety, both infirmity and unselfishness. He would be at any labor to build a tabernacle or booth for his Master and his two heavenly visitants, and yet he would not do it without his Master's consent. He would build one for each of those whom he most highly prized; and yet he speaks not of erecting one for himself. He was evidently bewildered and dazzled by the splendor of the vision, and gave expression, in the high impetuosity of his emotions, to thoughts of which he knew not the drift; for it is written, “he

knew not what he said." He felt that he would like to continue, if possible, on that mountain, and therefore said to Jesus: "Master, it is good to be here." There seems to be in his words something of the spirit which induced him to say on another occasion, when our Lord had just announced his approaching death, "That be far from thee, Lord." He shrank from the thought of the suffering and the shame; and like him we fear to go through the gate of death, even though it prove to us the entrance to the path of life. We wish to abide here, and have heaven come down to us. This is not only our ignorance, but our sin; for we must go through deep humility to obtain the crown of glory.

If Peter had continued there, he could not have discharged the duties he owed to his family and his fellow-disciples, who were at the foot of the mount, and needed the Saviour's presence and teaching as well as he. And should Christ remain absent from the great company of the redeemed in heaven, for whom a kingdom was prepared above, where all God's children were to assemble with their Father and with their elder Brother?

His request—if it implied that Christ

and Moses and Elias should continue on that mount—was also impracticable. It was not reasonable to expect that Moses, the favored servant of the Lord, who had been before the throne for 1,500 years, should descend and dwell upon a barren mountain; nor that Elijah, who had been taken to heaven in a chariot of fire, should dwell in an earthly tabernacle again; and more than all, how could the Lord Jesus remain in that glory, and yet die for human guilt? The conversation in which the three for whom Peter had proposed to build tabernacles had just been engaged must have been overlooked by the disciple, or have made but little impression upon his mind. Had not Christ descended from that mountain to die, Peter himself would never have been redeemed, and the hopes of mankind would have been blighted.

How wretched, often, would be our condition, if God should give us all we desire, or permit us to choose for ourselves. The crown cannot be won without the cross. The splendor and joy of all our Tabors must soon be exchanged for the tears and the sadness of Gethsemane. In the garden of Joseph of Arimathea, the disciple and friend of Jesus,

“there was a sepulchre.” The sweetest intervals of joy which may be granted to us on the brightest spot of earth are not meant to detain us, but to strengthen us, that we may set out with brave hearts and with earnest feelings to tread the weary road of life, pilgrims and strangers, looking for the rest that remaineth for the people of God.

But though these and other things may indicate the impropriety of Peter's proposal, yet there was much in his language which was right and proper, and which evinced the goodness of his heart. It was right that he should take pleasure in the glory of his Master, and wish that Christ should be universally honored; that men might witness on that mountain-summit the glory in which he himself delighted, and bow before his Lord. It was right that he should love the society of the blessed, and take pleasure in hearing the conversation of the inhabitants of heaven. It was right that he should wish to be removed, as far as duty would permit, from the sins and sorrows of the world; and since he had witnessed beneath that mountain, wherever he went, nothing but folly, vice, incredulity, and misery, it was both natural and right that he

should desire to be with Christ, that he might see more of his glory, and more of the inhabitants of heaven. On that mountain he might have been exempted from all trouble—from the snares of the Pharisees and from the revilings of the world. He asked no tabernacle for himself. He would be content to remain without any roof over his own head, provided his Master might be continued in his glory, and that he might enjoy the fellowship of the saints.

This will be the very temper of heaven. When, through infinite grace, we have reached that blessed place, we shall exclaim, as Peter did, "Lord, it is good to be here." It is always good to be where Jesus is. He is the source of light and joy—the excellency, the consolation, the glory of his people Israel. "Wherever two or three" of his people "are met together in his name," Jesus is with them, as he was with the disciples on the mount of Transfiguration. Like that mountain, each sanctuary, though it be little, is "apart" from the world, and in a spiritual sense, above it. It is a place of intercourse with kindred minds—of hallowed instruction, where "Christ and him crucified" is the great theme.

As the disciples had more glorious mani-

festations of Jesus on Tabor, and saw more of his radiant countenance, glistening raiment, and effulgent brightness than they ever enjoyed before, so nowhere is Jesus seen so clearly and beautifully as in his own house. He manifests himself there especially to his people as he does not unto the world. Many a time, when the child of God has had his heart enlarged and his mind enlightened, when the doctrine of Christ's meritorious death has spoken peace to his conscience, and he has been led to know something of the communion of saints, in his fellowship with the church triumphant as well as the church militant, then has he felt in his heart what his lips may not have expressed: "Lord, it is good to be here."

"I've seen thy glory and thy power
Through all thy temple shine.
My God, repeat that heavenly hour,
That vision so divine."

MATTHEW 17 : 5 : “While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them.”

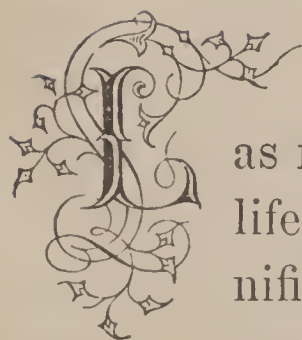
MARK 9 : 7 : “And there was a cloud that overshadowed them.”

LUKE 9 : 34 : “While he thus spake, there came a cloud and overshadowed them.”

XIV.

THE BRIGHT OVERSHADOWING CLOUD.

“Think of the cloud, the heavenly light,
The cross of sovereign love!
And oh, let faith and love unite
To raise our souls above.”



LIGHTS and shadows alternate, as regularly as day and night, in the life of man. Delighted with the magnificence of that apocalypse, Peter perhaps was for staying on that hallowed ground; and not knowing what he said, his lips uttered, “Let us make three tabernacles,” etc.; but while he yet spoke, a cloud overshadowed them.

God has frequently manifested himself through the medium of a cloud. In his essence he is invisible, and dwells in light to which no man can approach, a light too dazzling for mortal eyes, and hence he can be seen only through a cloud. “He holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth a

cloud upon it." When his presence was with Israel, it was in a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night. When he gave the law on Sinai, he descended in a cloud. When he came down into the tabernacle and the temple, a cloud was the symbol of his presence. When the vision was vouchsafed to Ezekiel, it was a great cloud—a fire enfolding itself. When Jesus ascended to glory, a cloud received him out of sight; and when he shall come the second time without sin unto salvation, he will come with clouds, with power and great glory.

But on this occasion, the cloud that overshadowed the disciples was, as we are told by Matthew, a "bright" cloud, denoting perhaps the graciousness and clearness of the gospel dispensation over that of the legal and ceremonial. Not such a cloud as gathered on the summit of Horeb, nor such as constituted the blackness and darkness of Sinai; but a cloud, through which, "as a glass, darkly," the disciples might catch a glimpse of God, who "maketh the clouds his chariot," and darkness a medium of transmitting light.

This bright cloud that overshadowed the disciples might have been bestowed then in kindness, to soothe and to mitigate the intense

light by which Peter was dazzled. He was bewildered by the brightness, and a cloud came to intervene and subdue the otherwise insufferable glory.

Or, this bright cloud may have been vouchsafed to separate Moses and Elias from the three disciples who longed to retain them as fellow-worshippers upon the mount. Or, more probably, it came as the accustomed attendant of the majesty of heaven; of God, who has now descended to put his public seal to the Messiahship of Jesus; for a voice was heard from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

We should keep in remembrance that there must always be a cloud in the way to glory. As the people of God were led through the wilderness to Canaan by the pillar of cloud and fire, so few of his children now enter the kingdom of heaven without an attendant cloud, a cloud with its dark side, and a cloud also with its silver lining.

The object for which the cloud is sent is various. Sometimes God overshadows a man with a cloud, reducing him from wealth to poverty, to make him think; taking away his friends, to make him think; yea, smiting into

dust the very darling of his heart, to make him think, to "make him tremble in himself, that he may rest in the day of trouble."

Nor does the cloud come to overshadow a man merely to bring conviction to his conscience. It attends him onward through life, and subserves the purposes of God and the interests of man in various ways.

The bright cloud came between the disciples and the vision they had been contemplating with so much rapture, and hid it from their sight. And thus is it to the disciples still. A Christian's highest enjoyments are sometimes put an end to by God himself. He may think that he has sinned away his previous privilege, or trifled it away, or by some means driven it away, and this is perhaps very generally the truth. But it is not always so. The intercepting cloud, like that which we are now considering, is sometimes of God's sending. The vision has done its work, its appointed, strengthening, comforting work; and that done, the vision is withdrawn.

The two disciples on the way to Emmaus, had their Saviour long by their side, instructing them, and making their very hearts burn within them. But no sooner had they recog-

nized him, and begun to rejoice in his presence, than, without any fault of theirs, he vanished out of their sight.

You may have had a similar experience. Your sight of Jesus may have been transporting, and your enjoyment of his love beyond expression. You were almost in ecstasy during the continuance of the vision, but it soon passed away, and left you as men that dreamed. If *this* has been your experience at any time, take comfort from the thought that whenever God intercepts our enjoyments, he has always something better in store for us—not something more joyous perhaps, but something more solid, durable, and useful.

What can be better, you may ask, than the splendid vision here granted to Peter? The *cloud* that put an end to that vision brought something better, even the *voice* that came from the cloud. Peter might not have thought so at the time; but thirty years afterwards, *looking back* at the scene, we find him referring, not so much to the splendor of it—the shining face, the glittering raiment, the heavenly attendants of the transfigured Lord—as to the *testimony* he and his fellow-disciples

received on that mount to their Lord: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Twice he refers to the testimony, and in such a way as plainly to discover that it was the point in the transfiguration that, at that long distance of time, was uppermost in his memory, and most dearly cherished by his heart.

And so it is frequently with the Christian now. God has given him some discovery of Christ which warms and delights his soul. Nothing, he thinks, can be more joyful and precious. But God throws a cloud over that discovery, so that he can enjoy it no longer. And like Peter and his companions, he is afraid, as he enters into the cloud. He thinks the Lord has turned against him, and is about to leave him comfortless. But the truth is, he was in danger of building his happiness on the *enjoyments* granted to him, and taking up his rest *in them*, and of making *them*, rather than the *Giver* of them, his trust and confidence. Or, his enjoyment had a tendency, or *would* have had, if continued, to confine his view to one phase of the Saviour's character, or to some one of his offices. The vision is therefore removed, and the enjoyments pass away ;

and after a little period of disquiet and perplexity, he understands the dealings of the Lord with him. The Redeemer's character is now impressed upon his mind in all its loftiness, and in the great purpose for which he sustained it. He sees Christ in the character in which he most needs him, in which he shall to all eternity most adore and rejoice in him as "the Beloved of the Father," in whom we guilty sinners are accepted; and so seeing him, the Christian thanks the God of all grace for interrupting for a time his delightful enjoyment, or rather, for bringing him by that interruption anew as a sinner to the mighty Saviour, beloved of the Father. So when we receive some extraordinary manifestations of the love of God, some foretastes of the promised happiness, we must not expect the enjoyment to be uninterrupted or long continued. When a holy discourse or meditation has elevated our thoughts, or when in communicating at the table of the Lord, God has been pleased to visit us with communications of his love, and to meet us in the joy of our heart, we must not rely upon it that this will be permanent, or that our mind will continue thus soaring on the wings of faith and love.

Moses was not permitted to dwell on Mount Horeb, where he spoke with God face to face, nor upon Mount Pisgah, where he saw the land of promise. Nor was Paul allowed to remain in the third heavens, whither he was caught up and heard unspeakable words, which it was not lawful for him to utter; and the joy of the three disciples was soon turned into apprehension as the cloud came and overshadowed them.

Christians are liable, while they remain on earth, to such changes as these. There is stability in the *essentials* of holiness. The grace of God implanted in the soul never dies. But the growth of it, the exercise of it, the comforts that flow from it, are alike liable to change, and do change, and such changes are profitable for our souls.

Our weak eyes cannot long endure the lustre of the heavenly glory; a cloud must come and overshadow—a cloud so chill and dark and boding that, like the disciples, we may “fear as we enter into the cloud;” and yet, out of that cloud, so vain were their fears, there came a voice to confirm their confidence in Christ.

Travellers tell us that there is something

melancholy to the feelings in the *unbroken sunshine* of an Italian sky. And if unbroken sunshine is an emblem of uninterrupted prosperity, what a melancholy sight is an individual who has seen no darkening changes, for “if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons.” “Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity, though his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed.” One reason why multitudes of persons remain unconverted is, that their history resembles in some measure that of Moab. They have experienced a continuance of prosperity—no change of circumstance, no stroke of adversity. No condition in life is so morally dangerous as that in which there is no change. Seldom indeed does undisturbed prosperity lead to piety. When do the thoughts most turn to God? Is it when the sun shines brightly, or when the sky is darkened and the tempest raging? Experience and Scripture both testify that it is when they are in trouble that men do seek God early. Trouble has a natural tendency to lead men to God.

It is often in seasons of trial and of gloom that God gives to his own children the sweetest tokens of his compassion and love—"staying his rough wind in the day of his east wind;" giving "songs in the night," and revealing himself as "a very present help in the time of need."

The soul is most in danger, not when, like some gallant vessel, she is being tossed on a stormy sea; then, when the alarm is sounded, there will probably be an appeal to Him who is ever at hand to guide the helm and tranquillize the stormy element; but the safety of the soul is most jeopardized when all is outwardly peaceful, no tempest without to break the moral slumber, and no urgent necessity felt for the presence of Christ.

Painful as our changes are, damping to our hopes as is the cloud overshadowing our glory, it is with a merciful design that each and all are sent. Where there is no change there is commonly no advance in piety; whereas it must be our own fault if the experience of vicissitude wean us not from earth, and move us not to lay hold on eternal life. Come then change, come trial, come disappointment, come bereavement, come clouds of sorrow, come what-


ever may deliver from the thralldom of sin, whatever may sanctify, whatever may ripen for glory, whatever may save from the doom which the prophet pronounced: "And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem as with lighted candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees, that say in their heart, the Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil."

LUKE 9 : 34 : "And they feared as they entered into the cloud."

XV.

THE FEELING OF THE DISCIPLES ENTERING THE CLOUD.

“Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take ;
The clouds you so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.”

LOUD is the emblematic word for sorrow, for gloom, for sadness, threatened evil, or departed good. It embosoms the lightning, it portends the storm, it darkens the sunlight, and hides the directing stars. God himself has chosen it as the sign indicative of his presence: “I come unto thee in a thick cloud ;” and his assurance is that he dwells with him who is of a broken and a contrite heart. Many a suffering believer has realized his presence in the cloud that has shadowed him. It was there God met him, as he did Moses in the very bosom of the cloud, and held there intimate communion with him—communion unbroken and unwitnessed by the world.

But though sorrow and suffering have thus proved to many the shades in which God has met and blessed them, who has not been afraid as he entered that shadow which to him may have betokened the shadow of death? Why is it that we contemplate with dread the thing that proves ultimately to be fraught with good? Why do we shrink timidly and mistrustfully from the very path that leads to our greatest happiness? The great dramatist wrote an important truth when he said, "Conscience doth make cowards of us all." We know that we have sinned, and that we deserve to suffer; and therefore when any danger, real or imaginary, impends, we are ready with Joseph's brethren to acknowledge, "We are verily guilty."

When man was in his unfallen state, ere his robes of innocence were rent by disobedience, when love to God pervaded his heart, God walked and communed with him, and man enjoyed happiness that was unalloyed. But since that "first transgression," whenever God has appeared in any mode to the children of men, they have stood in awe of him, feeling that they were sinners; and instead of coming into his presence as children to a Father, in

love and joy, they have come as criminals into the presence of their Judge, with fear and trembling and dread. This has been the case with even the best of men.

When Moses, beloved of God, saw the Divine presence indicated by the bush burning but not consumed, and heard the command to take off the shoes from his feet, for the place whereon he stood was holy ground, he drew near, we are told, with trembling, and hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.

So the people of Israel whom Moses led, when they came to Mount Sinai where God wrote his law with his own finger on the two tables of stone, and when he spake face to face with Moses in the hearing of the people, amid blackness and darkness and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words accompanied with thunder and lightning, did exceedingly fear and quake.

So Elijah, when he was on Mount Carmel with the priests of Baal, and those priests had offered their sacrifice and called upon their god to appear and consume it, but called in vain, then Elijah called upon his God, and He sent down fire and consumed the sacrifice ; and it is recorded that great fear came upon

the people, and they cried with one voice, "The Lord, he is God! the Lord, he is God!"

Manoah concluded that he must die, since he had seen God face to face. Paul fell down before him, unable to sustain the brightness of his glory; and even the beloved disciple in Patmos, when he had a glimpse of the glorified Redeemer, fell at his feet as dead.

Once, as we have seen, man could converse with his Maker face to face; but since he became a sinner, he has been haunted by a sense of guilt, and has been incapacitated for so high an honor. The feeling, therefore, of the disciples in entering the cloud, was the effect not only of weakness and ignorance, but of a sense of sinfulness. "They feared as they entered into the cloud."

Why should they fear? If all were right with Peter and James and John, they should have rejoiced rather than feared. But they were frail, ignorant, and sinful—therefore they trembled when God's glory came upon them. And it is also worthy of notice, that the brighter the discoveries men have had of God, the more have they been humbled in the dust before him. Abraham and Moses no sooner

caught a glimpse of him, than they hid their faces, from a consciousness of their own extreme unworthiness. Job, though one of the most perfect of men, confessed himself vile, and repented himself in dust and ashes. Yea, even the seraphim before the throne veil their faces and their feet, confessing thereby that they are unworthy either to behold or to serve God. And would not a view of the Lord and his glory make every reader of these words cry out as did Isaiah of old, "Woe is me, for I am undone ; for I am a man of unclean lips."

A discovery of created things may puff us up ; but a sight of God himself cannot but abase us in the dust. This one thing should always be kept in remembrance, that a day is coming when the most stout-hearted and impenitent sinner will tremble before him. If Peter and James and John, the favored disciples of the Master, "feared as they entered into the cloud" on the mount where stood the transfigured Saviour—if John, who had lain on the bosom of his Lord, and was himself so eminently holy, so highly beloved—if he fell at the Redeemer's feet as dead when that Redeemer appeared to him in his celestial vestments, what will his enemies do in the day of

judgment, when he shall come with clouds, and every eye shall see him? If when God spake from Sinai the Israelites were so terrified as to desire that he should not speak to them in such a way any more, and Moses himself "exceedingly feared," how will the wicked tremble in that day when Jesus shall appear in glory, as the appointed Judge of human kind? They may laugh and despise that Saviour now, but then they shall call upon the rocks to fall on them, and the mountains to hide them from the face of Him who sitteth upon the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.

It is true that the disciples upon the holy mount had no need to fear as they entered the cloud. Jesus was with them as their Friend, the glorified saints were about them; yea, heaven itself was open, and the voice of the Father heard speaking in love; yet they feared. Often is it so with us. We have lessons to learn from every thing recorded in God's holy book; and there is a lesson for us here.

We are led by the providence of God somewhere, and as if by the very hand of the Saviour: we may not know where we are going nor what we are to see; but there seems

to be something overhanging us which we cannot understand, and something about to happen which, with our dimmed vision, we cannot foresee; and although we know that it is God who is leading us, yet we cannot but tremble as we proceed. We ought to take the comfort of the thought that Jesus is with us, and rest peacefully upon his promise, "When thou goest through the waters, I will be with thee, and they shall not overflow thee." The saints in glory have passed through before us, and are witnesses to whatever may befall us, while the voice of the Father may be heard acknowledging his Son, and owning us in him in whom he is well pleased. Let us ever remember that we need not fear, wherever we are, if Jesus has led us there, and if we are doing the things which are pleasing to him.

And how often does the result prove the very opposite of our fears—even an occasion of rejoicing and reassurance. A cloud gathers around us. The heavens are obscured. We behold the gloom thickening which seems to threaten us with darkness and obscurity, and we say as we enter the cloud, "Trembling hath taken hold upon me,

and horror hath overtaken me." And yet what is the result? From that very cloud there comes a voice which says, "This is my beloved Son."

It is in the hour of sorrow that we commonly know more of the preciousness of Christ, and that he is more clearly revealed to us as having borne our griefs, as well as having offered himself for our sins. The cloud that seems charged with thunder melts away from the sky, and there falls on us nothing but the gracious dew which refreshes and nourishes the plants of the Lord. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." We may fear as we *enter* into the cloud, but *when it passes away*, we find ourselves alone with Christ, though before there might have been with us Moses and Elias. Is it not then a blessed cloud which, by removing from us human teachers, leaves us with Christ, whose teaching is only truth, and whose friendship is eternal life?

MATT. 17:5: "And behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.'"

LUKE 9:35: "And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, 'This is my beloved Son: hear him.'"

XVI.

“THIS IS MY BELOVED SON.”

“It is the Father’s voice that cries
’Mid the deep silence of the skies :
‘This is my beloved Son !
In him I joy, in him alone.’”



ONE great design of the transfiguration, the bright cloud which overshadowed the disciples, and the voice from that cloud, was the solemn inauguration of Christ as the Lord’s Anointed, in the presence of his three chosen witnesses ; and his formal introduction into office as both the Teacher and Redeemer of the world.

The designation of prophets to the sacred office under the former dispensation, was often accompanied with circumstances peculiarly solemn and sublime. Moses received his commission from amid the burning but unconsumed bush ; Isaiah was separated to the work by a vision of God “ high and lifted up,” with a train which filled the temple, and encircled

by veiled and adoring seraphim ; and Ezekiel was not sent forth to prophesy to a rebellious nation, until from the banks of the river of Chebar he had been permitted to see the whirlwind and the brightness and the wheels of God's chariots rolling, and the ministers of his providence flapping their anointed wings, till the noise was as the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty.

Yet in none of these transactions do we see any thing like the impressiveness and majesty which mark the solemn transfiguration of our Lord. Those men, as servants, only saw the brightness of the Father's glory. Christ as a Son was himself that brightness. Those did exceedingly fear and quake at the awful solemnities with which they found themselves unexpectedly surrounded. Christ, on the contrary, prepares for his transfiguration ; in calm and solemn majesty puts on his robe of light, and holds high communion with the two glorified spirits of the past on " the things which shall be hereafter."

Thus was Christ more openly sealed and sanctified to the prophetic and priestly office. Angels had announced his birth, and the descending Spirit had put honor on his baptism ;

but Christ must be shown to have more glory than Moses, and more of authority and power than all “the goodly fellowship of the prophets.” The times were past in which God had spoken to our fathers by the prophets; he would now speak to us by his Son. “Those,” he seems to say, “were my servants whom at sundry times and in divers manners I instructed to make known my will to the people; but He whom ye now see radiant in all his transfigured splendor, ‘THIS is my beloved Son: hear him.’”

Let us then think of the relationship in which Christ stands to God the Father, “MY BELOVED SON.” When God the Father speaks of God the Son, there must be something in his words which passes our comprehension. When an infinite Being speaks of an infinite, we may be sure there is something in the language beyond our fathoming. We cannot fully comprehend these words, “My beloved Son.” We can only look a little way into the depths of the glorious declaration, and those few thoughts which we may entertain respecting it ought to be enough to act with great power upon our minds and hearts.

Jesus is often termed in Scripture the Ser-

vant of God, and so he is as Mediator, and the dearest of servants. He has glorified God more than any creature could glorify him. He has obeyed him as no other being has obeyed him. He gives to the divine Being more honor and glory than all his creatures ; and therefore it was said of him, "Thou art my servant in whom I will be glorified." But *He was more* than a servant. All others have been *mere* servants ; but Christ was more than they. Moses was but a servant when he was appointed the lawgiver of Israel, and the typical and temporary mediator between God and that nation. Angels are but his ministers, whom he has made to please and serve him. But Christ, we are told in the first chapter of Hebrews, is more than this, "for to which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son ; this day have I begotten thee?" All his intelligent creatures are his sons by *creation*, and sinners are his apostate sons. They have become children of wrath. All the disciples of Jesus Christ are his sons by adoption, but only by adoption. Jesus Christ is God's Son in a *sense infinitely superior* to any of these. He is his Son by nature, distinct from the Father, and yet so intimately

connected with him as to be able to say, “I and my Father are one”—one in *essence*, one in *dignity*, one in *counsel*, one in *work*, one in *glory*.

But the term “Son,” as applied to Jesus by the Father, we cannot clearly nor fully comprehend: not a Son in like manner with angels or saints, but “his only begotten Son,” possessing the express image of the divine Person, having communion with him in all his infinite perfections. “He thought it not robbery to be equal with God,” “was in the beginning with God, and was God.” The word “Son,” when applied to Christ, was understood by the Jews, who best understood their own language and allusions, to denote essential deity, for we read John 5:18: “The Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father,” his own peculiar Father, as the original has it, “making himself equal with God.” And so he did, for *he is* “the brightness of the Father’s glory,” and *because he is God*, “the Father, when he bringeth his First-Begotten into the world, saith, Let all the angels of God worship him.”

What a blessed and consoling thought,

then, have we here. Jesus our Saviour is God! We have a divine and an all-precious Saviour. We need the everlasting arms around us, and the attributes of Deity to shelter us. We require omnipotent power as well as inexhaustible love to constitute a Saviour adequate to the rescue of one soul from the ruins of the fall, and the restoration of that soul to fellowship with God. And, blessed be God, he provided that Saviour for us in the person of his own Son, of a nature equal to himself, who came into the world not only to save men, but to glorify his Father; and well might that Father, when he designed signally to attest the greatness of the Mediator, send a voice from the excellent glory with no other proclamation than these simple words, "This is my beloved Son."

Christ is not only God's Son, but he is his BELOVED Son. How much the Father loves the Son is not for us to know. We cannot know it. God, having an infinite nature, is capable of infinite love; and Christ also having an infinite nature, has infinite worthiness of being loved; and when God the Father with his infinite nature loves God the Son, who is infinitely worthy of love, that love

must be beyond our knowledge and beyond all thought.

God so loved vile rebels, proud, hard-hearted sinners, that he has given them Christ, his Spirit, pardon, peace, purity, eternal glory. What, then, must be the love he bears to his infinitely excellent Son, to Jesus, who has infinite loveliness—qualifications infinitely worthy of being loved? “I was by Him,” says Jesus, speaking of the Father, “as one brought up with him; I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.”

What honor then do we see here conferred upon Christ! They are all illustrious personages who are here assembled upon the mount. But Christ is the chief. The *law* did him homage in the person of Moses, by whom it was received and published. The *prophets* did him homage in the person of Elijah, the most zealous, courageous, and honored of all that brotherhood. The *gospel* did him homage in Peter, James, and John, the favored representatives of the chosen apostles, who were soon to proclaim it to the ends of the earth; and *heaven* itself did him homage by investing his person with celestial splendor, and causing a voice to be heard from the excellent glory. Jesus had

previously declared to the Jews, when speaking of the Father, "No man hath seen his shape, or heard his voice at any time." But now, as at his baptism, and again when he prayed, "Father, glorify thy name," *now*, for the express honor and glory of the Son, there was a *marked* departure from the ordinary events.

The voice from the excellent glory was doubtless the voice of the first person of the Trinity attesting the divine mission and Sonship of the second. It was the infinite Father, coming forth from his secret pavilion, proclaiming his complacency in the Son of his bosom, and avowing himself well pleased with the purpose and progress of his sublime undertaking on behalf of our perishing race. It was God's own distinctive testimony to the Messiahship of his Son, pointing to him as that divine Being, that one Mediator in whom all prophecies and promises met, were illustrated and fulfilled, and before whom every human creature, though he were illustrious as Moses and Elijah, must fall into the shade. *He*, and *He* alone, is "my beloved Son." As it was on Tabor's mount, so it must be now in every temple and in every heart. Every niche must

be emptied of its idol, that Christ, the only-begotten and well-beloved of the Father, may be all and in all.

And we are assured by this beloved Son, that he loves his people as God loves him. “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you.”

The Father’s love to his Son was from *everlasting*. There never was a period when God did not love Jesus, because that love was eternal, coexistent with his deity. Every manifestation of that love given in time, was but an expression of a love that had existed from all eternity. Just so does Christ love his people. There never has been a period when he did not love them. It was his everlasting love which led him to endure the cross and despise its shame, in order to save his people from their sins.

The Father’s love to the Son is *without measure*—boundless, and has been shown to be so by the gifts which he has bestowed upon him. He has given him the Spirit without measure. He has given him all things. He has committed all judgment to the Son. Jesus Christ is Lord of all. So is Christ’s love to his people without measure. It knows no

limits, and can know no end. It is unbounded, unsearchable. Its heights and depths and lengths and breadths are infinite. An angel's mind cannot conceive and an angel's tongue cannot express it.

The Father's love to his Son is *without change*. This is the Father's character: "With whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning." True, he did not *seem* to hear his prayer in dark Gethsemane; but he did hear and answer it, for an angel soothed His bitter agony and strengthened him from heaven. True, his love seemed to be withdrawn from him when hanging upon the accursed tree; but the Father loved him always, and the apparent suspension of the Father's love was the necessary means of accomplishing his purpose of love to the Saviour himself.

So Christ's love to his people is unchangeable—"the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." There may be and there are times and seasons in the experience of God's people, when the Lord seems to withdraw his love, but it is not so. He may and will try the righteous, just as he tried his servant Job; but his own declaration is, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but

my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.”

The Father’s love for the Son is *without end*. This he has shown by exalting him to his throne as the reward of his humiliation, giving him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. As the Father’s love began in eternity, or, rather, never had a beginning, so it will be swallowed up in eternity, unchangeable and unending.

So Christ’s love to his people endures for ever. “His gifts and calling are without repentance.” Having loved his own, he loves them unto the end, “and he will raise them up at the last day.” What a sweet thought to the Christian, that nothing can “separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

If God thus loves his Son, and if the Son thus loves those who believe on him, ought not this beloved Son of God to be beloved by you and by me and by all? He is the infinite God, before whose glorious throne the seraphim veil their faces, who dwelt in his Fa-

ther's bosom from eternity, as beloved by that Father in lowliness, as he was and is now upon his throne. If God loves Christ, oh, do you love Christ also, and your heart and the heart of God will meet in Christ, and God will be one with you. Without Christ there is nothing but enmity between God and the soul, but with him all is love and peace. Oh, how awful is the condition of that dying, ruined soul that bears no love to Jesus! "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ," says Paul, "let him be Anathema Maranatha"—*let him be accursed.*

God best knows the just proportions of guilt and punishment, and he has subjected this sin to this dreadful curse. But if you are conscious that you do not love the Lord Jesus Christ, and if it is sincerely your grief, and if you earnestly wish it were otherwise, instead of wasting your time in fruitless speculations, offer your humble, earnest supplications to the God of all grace that he, who only can do it, would direct your heart into the love of Christ; and that though you may have been so many years a lover of the world, of pleasure, of yourself, and of sin, he would transform you into the affectionate, devoted disciple of Jesus Christ.

What a precious truth have we, therefore, in this first part of this glorious declaration made by the voice from the cloud: “This is my beloved Son.” Our finite faculties will only permit us to go a little way in the consideration of the love which the Father bears to the Son. But it must be an infinite love, for the Father is capable of yielding such, and the Son is worthy of receiving such.

It is a love so great, that the Son is privy to all the Father’s counsels, and is never absent from them. It is a love so great, that Christ is accorded a seat upon the throne of the universe, and the universal and eternal homage of all the most glorious creatures that exist is but a just recompense for what he has accomplished.

It is a love so great that every friend of Jesus, though once a hell-doomed transgressor, becomes for his sake at once a friend, a child of God, and an heir of glory.

It is a love so great that no intercession He ever makes for the worst and the weakest upon earth loses its effect, but each for whom He intercedes is accepted, pardoned, and blessed.

It is love so great, that if any man love

not Christ, he becomes the object of God's eternal curse. God will never permit an intelligent being to live and die indifferent to this incarnate Saviour without absolute ruin. Every man who rejects Christ, or even *neglects* him, will find his course terminate in despair. God so loves his beloved Son, that he cannot endure the slightest dishonor to him; and woe to any man, anywhere, who dares to put God's love to Christ to the proof by living and dying in indifference, and awaiting his sentence at the judgment-seat.


But this love "passeth knowledge." It is beyond the grasp of our finite minds. We can only sit on the shore of the shoreless sea, and gather a few pebbles to gratify our childish hearts; but the unsounded depths are away before and beneath us, and the voice of God is heard saying, "Who can by searching find out God? who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?" "THIS IS MY BELOVED SON."

MATT. 17 : 5 : "In whom I am well pleased."

XVII.

“IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED.”

“Beloved of the Father—thou
To whom the saints and angels bow,
Immanuel, Jesus, Saviour, come,
Make in these sinful hearts thy home.”

ERE is another blessed truth which equally “passeth” our “knowledge.” We cannot know or fathom the nature of that contentment or complacency with which God the Father views the Son. Between them there is a perfect oneness of perfection and will. The Father delights in the Son, and the Son delights in the Father. God said, when the Word created the earth, “It is very good,” because from the things which were made we could learn his “eternal power and godhead.” But the most perfect reflection of God, the only unstained mirror of his glory, is Jesus Christ. He was “God manifest in the flesh.” All that man’s eye can see of God is to be seen in Christ. All that man’s ear can hear of God

is to be heard from Christ. The only way to learn what God is, and what he is to us, is to study that mirror which reflects most purely his glory, and to listen to that oracle which utters most exactly his pure and spiritual voice; and this miracle and that oracle are to be found in Jesus Christ, God's beloved Son, in whom he has been, is, and shall be well pleased.

But we apprehend that it is with Christ *in his mediatorial capacity* that God is especially "well pleased." He is well pleased with him as God-man, in the purity of his human nature, in his holy, sinless, and undefiled life, in the benevolence of his mission, in his perfect obedience, in his sacrifice, resurrection, ascension, glorification, intercession,—all were, and are, and shall be well pleasing to the Father.

Jesus undertook the most difficult, the most compassionate, the most blessed work which the universe has seen or can see to all eternity. There can never be such a work again as Jesus undertook to accomplish for us. And he did his work well. God is well pleased with him for the accomplishment of our salvation.

He is well pleased with him because, *as*

Mediator, he magnified all the attributes of the godhead. Under the Jewish dispensation, God gave many demonstrations of his sovereignty and might, but he never gave *in one person* a visible manifestation of *all* his attributes. There were thrilling voices and burning words in Isaiah's imagery, but there was no form, no figure, and no similitude. It remained for Christ, the express image of the Father, to assume human nature, and to become the perfect portrait of the Father for the children of men to behold; so perfect that he could truly say, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”

Christ revealed all that can be seen or understood of God. He stood in the midst of an evil generation; subject indeed to all its sinless infirmities, but still manifestly a Being of another sphere, gifted with omniscience and endowed with omnipotence. He was the glorious personification of all that our minds, in their highest and holiest musings, can ascribe to God. If we think of him as the sublime and tender Jehovah—the holy, mighty, and merciful One, possessed of the immensity of omnipotence and the yearnings of infinite compassion, we have only to look to the beloved

Son as he trod this vale of tears, and we see all exhibited in him.

When we behold foul spirits shrinking away at his approach, and stormy seas hushing themselves into deep slumbers at his word, and disease and death giving up at his command the wasting body and the mouldering form—when we behold briny tears falling from eyes which had no sins of their own for which to weep—when we know that soft and moving words were meekly uttered in reply to fierce revilings, and invitations to repentance and promises of forgiveness fell amid scoffing and hardened multitudes—*then* we behold such a demonstration of power, such an exhibition of mercy, such a display of wisdom, such a manifestation of purity, such an exercise of forbearance and long-suffering, and in a word, such a representation of the ever-living God as was never before given to man.

Bright and luminous as all former displays of his glory might have been, yet all have no glory by reason of the glory of this which excelleth, and are lost in this superior blaze, as the sun when he rises puts out the stars of night. And because of this marvellous disclosure of himself which the Son makes to

fallen man and to the intelligent universe, the Father exultingly declares from the cloud on the holy mount, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

One other thought may, however, bring out this truth more clearly. Not only did Christ in his nature and in his life manifest all the Father's attributes, but *by his obedience, sufferings, and death, he glorified these attributes.* Had no Mediator interposed when Adam fell, so far as we can gather from Scripture, not one of his descendants could have escaped the bitter pangs of eternal death. And had all his descendants perished in their iniquities, so perfectly just would have been their doom, that no tongue could have moved against God, and every mouth must have been stopped. And yet God has derived more glory from the scheme of redemption than if all his fallen creatures had been reserved in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day. He has more glory from his righteous law, as it was obeyed in all its precepts by Christ, than from the punishment of all who broke it—more glory from God's hatred of sin, as it was seen in not sparing his own Son—the bruising and putting to grief of his only begotten and

well-beloved Son—than in actually casting away the creatures of perdition ; more glory from the purity, justice, power, and wisdom displayed in the *restoration* of man by the second Adam than from the destruction of man through the disobedience of the first. And if so, who will deny that all that Christ did and suffered on earth brought, according to his angelic birth-song, “Glory to God in the highest,” as well as “on earth peace and goodwill to men.”

Who can survey “mercy and truth met together,” “righteousness and peace having kissed each other.”—who can behold cherubim and seraphim bending over the gospel covenant, desiring to search and scrutinize the mysteries of the glorious combination, “a just God and a Saviour”—“just and yet a Justifier,” and not perceive that the Son crucified is the Father glorified ; that Christ derided, buffeted, and slain for men is God exalted, honored, and vindicated ; that salvation through blood sprinkled and righteousness upheld is a centre towards which all God’s attributes converge, and in which they meet as in a burning focus, forming at once the illustration of the words, “God is light, and in him is no darkness at

all;” and the explanation of the emerald rainbow which encircles Jehovah’s throne.

Yes, Christ stood among men, the express image of his Father’s person; and he actually died among men, not more as the Restorer of his fallen creatures than as the Vindicator of the insulted Creator; not more as the Deliverer from sin than the Manifester of the magnificence of God—the Magnifier, in his mediatorial capacity, of all his attributes.

And while such vast results, involving the honor of Him who sitteth on the circle of the heavens, were to follow from the mission in which Christ was engaged, and which was fast hurrying him forward to a triumphant issue—shall we marvel that the voice of congratulation was heard, pronouncing such words as these: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased?”

Nor was the Father well pleased with his Son merely because he magnified all his attributes, but because he also *met and satisfied all the necessities of man*. There is need of but few words to show the adaptation of the work of the Saviour to the wants of the sinner. Man, by nature, lies under condemnation; but Christ endured that condemnation, “being

made a curse for us." Man, even when freed from condemnation, has no power to attain unto a righteousness acceptable in the sight of God; but Christ, by his obedience unto death, wrought out a righteousness not for himself, but for all who should believe on him. Man, though pardoned and accepted as righteous, is yet unfit, through the pollution and dominion of sin, to enter into association with the undefiled company of heaven; but Christ, by his death, purchased the Spirit, and as a risen and glorified Saviour, intercedes with the Father to obtain the Spirit, by whose influence the justified man is sanctified, so that he who before had a title to the inheritance, acquires a fitness for entering into its possession.

Hence there remains no necessity for which a supply is still wanting. Christ is literally made of God unto us "wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption," and thus the soul is "complete in him." When, therefore, we consider the love of the Father for guilty men—that "He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"—that the language of his yearning soul over them is, "How shall I give thee

up”—we can well understand that, when he found a Ransom for man, one who could bear the weight of his transgressions, and supply all the wants and weakness of his disobedience, thus bringing his many sons to glory, he would rejoice in spirit, and cause such words as these to be heard by the children of men: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

Having meditated thus upon the Son, so beloved and so well pleasing to the Father, let me ask every sinful one, dependent on God’s bounty and grace, *Are you well pleased with this beloved Son?* The natural man is not well pleased with Christ, for he is filled with enmity towards him. The self-righteous man is not well pleased with Christ, for instead of instantly and gratefully accepting His perfect righteousness, he goes about to establish his own. No man is well pleased with Christ who has not embraced Him as his Saviour, as He is freely offered to him in the gospel. And if you have embraced him, you may rest assured that, through Christ and in Christ, God is well pleased with you. Though a sinner, yet in Christ, and trusting in him, the Father grants you forgiveness, acceptance, adoption

into the family of God. "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" to the heavenly inheritance.

Are you then really well pleased with this beloved Son, who came to save his people from their sins? Are you willing to be made whole by this great Physician? You are not well pleased, you are not willing, unless you are forsaking much which you naturally love—"crucifying the flesh, with its affections and lusts," "living soberly, righteously, and godly" in the midst of a world which continually plies you with temptations to live just the reverse.

Is your heart like the inn in Bethlehem, in which there was no room for the holy child Jesus? Oh, remember this, that God is well pleased with every thing *in* Christ, and that he is pleased with no intelligent earthly creature *out* of Christ. He is pleased with his people because they are in him as the branch is in the vine, as the stone is in the building, as the passenger is in the ship. So that whatever graces his people exemplify, whatever prayers they offer, whatever gifts they dedicate, whatever works they perform, our heavenly Father looks upon them through Christ

and in Christ with complacency. Christ is his beloved Son, with whom he is well pleased; and as he looks on him, so he looks on them.

“He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.”

Do you delight in Christ's work, rejoice in his offices, embrace the doctrines of his salvation, give yourself up to his care, gratefully work in his service? If not, the truth we have been considering has a menacing aspect towards you. If he is the Beloved of the Father, in whom his soul is well pleased, then you, without love to Jesus, are not ready for the judgment-seat.




MATT. 17:5: "Hear ye him."

LUKE 9:35: "Hear him."

XVIII.

“HEAR YE HIM.”

“We come to hear Jehovah speak—
To hear the Saviour’s voice.
Thy face and favor, Lord, we seek;
Now make our hearts rejoice.”

HESE words form the conclusion of the sentence spoken by the voice from the excellent glory, the cloud of God’s presence, as it overshadowed that glorious company on Tabor. We have considered the great truths embraced in the former parts of this heavenly speech, viz., Christ’s relationship to God and God’s satisfaction in Christ; *our duty* now is presented to us in the words, “Hear ye him.”

If those who will not hear Christ, or who doubt his claims to be heard, or who continue to be deaf to his admonitions, had stood on that mountain; and trembled before his surpassing splendor, when his face did shine as the sun; had they seen that excellent glory diffusing itself around them, till its glorious

effulgence made them afraid; had they, from the impenetrable depths of that glory, heard the awful voice saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him," would they have despised his voice?

But though they stood not on that mount, nor trembled in the presence of that glory, nor heard that awful voice, *yet God's words cannot be lost*. They are echoed to us still. They come as if vibrating the air which first bore them, or as uttered now from the heights of heaven, the region of surpassing glory; they come on God's authority to every individual. They are still God's words to us; and whether we hear or forbear, God says to us—to the children of men—as he said to the three chosen witnesses upon the mount of Transfiguration, "Hear ye him."

He had declared to Moses, centuries before, that the world must listen to this great Prophet when he came: "A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things, whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that every soul that will not hear that Prophet shall be destroyed from among the people." God will surely call

every one of us to account for the manner in which we discharge this commanded duty, “Hear ye him.”

Let us therefore consider this thought, and try to realize what it means, placing ourselves on that mountain where the glory was overwhelmingly dazzling, that we may hear the words of God the Father echoing in our ears, “Hear ye him.”

This command must have been, in Peter’s case at the time, of peculiar significance. He may have desired to detain on that mount Moses and Elias—the great lawgiver, and the eminent prophet; but, “No,” says this voice from the excellent glory, “let these go. The law and the prophets are no longer necessary. This is my beloved Son. He is now your Teacher. Hear ye Him.”

What a glorious testimony from God the Father to the preëminence of the beloved Son. Moses and Elias are overshadowed by the bright cloud, and vanish from the sight; but Christ remains. The law and the prophets yield to the far clearer and more glorious dispensation of the gospel. The veil which had long been drawn over this great and glorious truth is now for ever thrown aside, and Jesus

stands confessed — “The blessed and only Potentate. The King of kings and Lord of lords.”

“Hear ye him” was the death-note of the old dispensation, as it passed into oblivion; and it is now the inspiring cry of the church militant, as she goes on her way conquering through the earth; and it will be a portion of the chorus of the church triumphant, when, having overcome through the blood of the Lamb, she shall sit down an honored and glorious bride at the everlasting table of her Lord.

When we read the writings of Moses or the words of Elias, we are not to hear the law-giver or the prophet, but Christ. They were but the trumpets through which he spake. His breath gave them all their utterance and all their emphasis. To him gave all the prophets witness; him they all typified and foretold. He reveals life and immortality more clearly than Moses and Elias did. He puts an end to the dark dispensation of the ceremonial law, and introduces the light of grace and truth. He is himself the substance of all the legal sacrifices, and “the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” “Hear

him,” therefore, at all times, on all subjects, on all occasions, as to doctrine, worship, experience, practice, promises as to time and to eternity.

Some who call themselves Christians tell us that we are to “*hear the church.*” Yes, we may and ought to hear the church, as long as she repeats and explains Christ’s words as inspired and written in his holy book, giving permission at the same time to do as the noble Bereans did—“search the Scriptures,” each one for himself, “to see if these things” which the church says “are so.” We may and ought to hear the church in matters coming within the sphere of her jurisdiction, in so far as her decision is based upon and agreeable to the word of Christ. But in all that relates to the truths of God and the destiny of the soul—in all the knowledge that can guide a sinner in the path to everlasting glory—turn away from man and man’s words, and hear Christ, and Christ alone.

Read your Bible seeking to see and hear Jesus. If you read it for beautiful poetry or exquisite history or the loftiest morality, you will have your reward; but you ought not to be satisfied with the fairest and most fragrant

flowers of the garden, till you find “the Rose of Sharon.” You ought not to be satisfied with the shadow or the fruit of any tree that grows in it, until you sit under the shadow and eat of the fruit of the Tree of Life, which grows in the midst of the Paradise of God.

In the Bible, Jesus is speaking to mankind, and never man spake like him. Go, then, as an individual soul, and kneel at the feet of Jesus, listening not to what Moses or Elias, as mere men, nor to what any man or body of men may say, but to Him who is meeker than Moses, and who can lead you into the promised land; who is more zealous than Elijah, and is the Head of his body the church. Hear him, and you shall hear what prophets and kings desired to hear—a message of mercy, a remedy for all your ignorance, wretchedness, sorrows, sins; and if faith cometh to you by hearing from his lips, you shall hear these words at last: “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

There are many reasons why we should hear Christ. The simple command of God should be sufficient to constrain us to incline our ear.

But Christ is the messenger of the Father's love, and whatever he says has the superscription of God, the stamp of divinity and absolute authority. His enemies even declared that he spake as one having authority. The blind whose eyes he opened, the deaf whose ears he unstopped, the dead whose cold dust he quickened, the sea whose waves he laid, the wind whose fury he quelled, the multitude whom he saved by his grace and is conducting to his glory—all proclaim, in one simultaneous acknowledgment, “We know thou art a Teacher come from God, for no man can do those miracles which thou doest, except God be with him.”

“Hear him,” because he has truth which can never deceive you, a wisdom which knows what you need, a goodness which will command nothing but what will bless.

“Hear him,” because if you hear him he has promised to hear you: “If my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”

“Hear him,” for he speaks to you on the subject of the greatest importance, and speaks with a clearness, emphasis, authority, decision which scatter all doubts, solve all perplexi-

ties ; so that the simplest wayfaring man may not miss the road to glory. That great question, "What must I do to be saved?" finds its answer in Christ's words.

"Hear him," because God has declared what will be *the consequence of refusing to hear him*: "Whosoever will not hearken to my words, which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him." What the consequence of refusing to hear Christ will be at the bar of the offended Saviour and Judge eternity only can disclose in all its fearfulness and in all its extent. If Christ desires to instruct you, sit at his feet like Mary, and listen to his words. He will tell you what you must do and be. His words are commands, and will stand as law. By them you must be judged at the last. His precepts may run counter to your wishes, and condemn your conduct ; but even so, take up your cross and follow him ; for if you neglect him, he will overwhelm you with everlasting shame, for he is true to his word.

"Hear him ;" for if you hear him not, and keep not his words, you are building your hopes upon the sand, and when the tempest comes, as come it will, your fabric of hap-

piness must fall, and great will be the fall of it.

The terms may be brief, but they are emphatic, in which Jehovah has proclaimed Christ the only Prophet, Priest, and King of his people. Through him they are to know the way and the truth. By him their sins are to be purged away. To him they are to render obedience as to the supreme Lord of all. Jesus has been designated and ordained to all these offices by his Father. To Christ and to his work, to his Sonship, to his sacrifice, to his prophetic office, God demands from each of us a submissive, reverent attention for our well-being, as well as for his glory. It concerns us to hear him above and before all things. His claim is always the first one. First because of him who speaks; first in the importance of what he says. And Jesus, as a present, living Saviour, entreats us to hear him *now*.

It is not enough that you hear sermons or read the Bible. The grand duty and necessity is, to *hear Jesus*. The function of the preacher is, to invite you to hear Jesus, and not listen to his own thoughts. If you hear not Jesus, there is no worship, no divine wis-

dom, no life. If your soul does not come into converse with the living Saviour, your religion is a dead formality. Come, then, and deal with Christ himself. He speaks to you. You are now under the shadow of that bright cloud—for even the clouds of Christ are lined with light. Your eyes may have hitherto been heavy with sleep, and insensible to the glory of Jesus. But the voice of the Lord should arouse you. You are hastening to the bar of judgment, and are about to enter the curtain which veils eternity. Helpless, laden with iniquity, you are passing to a hopeless doom. You need to be cleansed, clothed, washed, justified, sanctified.

Who is to do this for you and upon you, to work in you the mighty transformation? No forms of devotion, no church, no priesthood. You must go to Christ personally, and deal with him. You must be washed in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. *Either this or eternal wrath—eternal death.* Oh what presumption, what wickedness, what deceitfulness of sin is in you, *if you do not hear!* “Behold, I stand at the door and knock,” says the Saviour; “if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will

sup with him, and he with me.” Will your heart not respond, “Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, why standest thou without?”

And wherever you hear Jesus, hear him *reverently*. When you open and read God’s holy book, remember you are listening to the very words that fell from the lips of the incarnate God. When the emperors of this world send a message to those who are legislating for the nation, the members of that legislative body rise, and with uncovered heads listen to the royal mandate. If they act thus to an earthly sovereign, how should you act towards a heavenly one? The King of kings has sent his message to you, and the highest and lowest are equally welcome to hear it, and both, with bowed hearts and reverent minds, ought to listen and read and ponder. “Be more ready to hear,” says Solomon, “than to give the sacrifice of fools.”

When you hear Christ, hear with *docility*. “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Listen to the words that are enunciated from God’s book, not as a critic, to discover how the preacher handles them, nor as theatre-goers, to witness a fine dramatic

spectacle, nor as opera-frequenters, to listen, as Ezekiel's hearers did, to one who sings a beautiful song or plays well upon an instrument ; but come as a poor, lost, guilty sinner, sitting down with the teachableness of a little child, receiving with joy, humility, gratitude, whatever the preacher says which has its foundation in God's holy book.

When you hear Christ, hear with *personal, special, and practical application*. Not only hear with special reference to yourself, but isolate yourself as much as possible from those around you, and listen as you would to the footfalls of the approaching Judge, and to the awful words that will establish or destroy for ever. "And be not," says Jesus, "a forgetful hearer, but a doer." The words you hear are for your guidance everywhere. At home, in the street, at your daily toil, wherever God in his providence has placed you, there you are to carry out in every-day life the directions you have received from Christ.

Hear him with a *deep, solemn sense of your responsibility*. There are few, if any, more solemn positions on earth, than to be a hearer of those great truths which shall not sleep, but

which must meet you at the judgment-seat of Christ. Christ's words, however plainly spoken, are to every one who hears them either a savor of life unto life or of death unto death. You cannot depart from the place where you have heard Christ's words, as you entered it. You will be more disposed to receive the next message, or to reject it. If you resist the appeal to-day, you will resist it more successfully to-morrow; until at length you will become so hardened that the word as addressed to you will but rebound and disappear.

Christ's words as heard by you now will be heard by you on the judgment-day, either as strains of music or as crashes of thunder. The precious seed of his word here sown will either grow up into harvests of beautiful wheat, which the great Husbandman will gather into his everlasting garner, or into weeds and thorns and thistles, that are fit only for the burning.

See, then, that ye refuse not Him that speaketh; “for if they escaped not who refused Him who spoke on earth, how much more shall not you escape, if you refuse Him that speaketh from heaven!”

“Hear Him,” and “your soul shall live;

and God will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

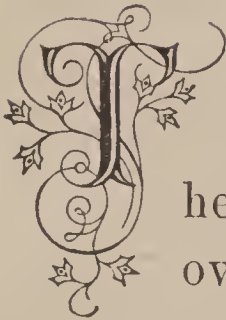
"My sheep," says Christ, "hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand."

MATT. 17 : 6 : “ And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.”

XIX.

THE EFFECT OF THAT VOICE UPON THE DISCIPLES.

“Teach us to pray and praise—to hear
And understand thy word ;
To feel thy blessed presence near,
And trust our living Lord.”

 HE solemnity and sublimity of the transfiguration scene reached their height at the moment the bright cloud overshadowed the disciples, and the voice of the Father's testimony proceeded from it. But no sooner is Jesus, under whose wing the disciples had felt secure, enveloped in the cloud, than fear took possession of their minds ; and when the voice from the excellent glory sounded from that cloud, their fear became overwhelming. “They fell on their face”—as if thunderstruck—“and were sore afraid.” Such was the awful impression which the voice from the Shechinah made upon the three disciples. It was the same feeling, only more intense, as took pos-

session of them when they entered into the cloud. It was produced by the consciousness that they were sinners, and that they were near the majesty of the Eternal. Adam, after he had sinned, Abraham, Moses, Job, the Israelites at Horeb and at Carmel, Isaiah, Daniel, the beloved disciple in Patmos, experienced similar feelings.

When we forget God, and have our minds occupied about ourselves or about the things of the world, we may imagine we are something, and be proud in our own conceit; but when God's excellent greatness is suddenly discovered to us, we sink into nothingness before him. Saul may go with haughty mien to Damascus to drag men and women to prison, and to persecute the disciples of the Lord; but as soon as there shines around him a light above the brightness of the sun, and a voice is heard from the cloud, he falls on his face to the earth, and trembling and astonished says, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

These disciples upon the mount needed to have impressed upon them their unworthiness and guilt, and so also do we. When we regard God as at a distance from us, and shut him out of our thought, we live at ease—troub-

led it may be sometimes with dim apprehensions of guilt and foreshadowing of punishment ; but these pass away, our sin is forgotten, and a Saviour is uncared for. We may indeed speak of him, admire his character, and even meditate on the glorious perfection of his work ; but there will be no due appreciation of him till the Father has revealed his glory to our souls. Then, when we see God and know that we are in his presence, we abhor ourselves, we feel that we must find the Saviour, and lay hold upon eternal life. There will be no rest or peace for us till he says, "Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin is purged."

But how shall they who have not fled to Christ and felt that in him they are safe, stand without terror in the immediate presence of the divine Majesty? A word from his mouth to the mightiest on earth, who is not thus prepared, would be as the voice of the Lord, which breaketh the cedars and maketh Lebanon and Carmel tremble. How different must be the view which men take of themselves and of the present state of existence, when they are ushered into the presence of the Almighty ! One day this will surely come

to pass. "Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." If men will not hear him now, nor trust in him now, they will finally meet him as their Judge. We are sinners, and as such we cannot stand in the presence of God. If he were to reveal his glory to our minds, as he could by the mere working of his Spirit within us; if he should manifest to us what our real character is in his sight, what our actions are as viewed by him, and what he is, we could not endure the sight; we could not come thus near to God without crying, awe-stricken before our Maker, "Behold, we are vile!" Once in the days of the Saviour's flesh, the disciples let down their net, at the command of Jesus, in the lake of Gennesaret, and they enclosed such a multitude of fish that their net brake, and their boat began to sink. Peter was so overwhelmed that he fell down at Jesus' knees, and cried, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." *He felt the presence of Deity.* The stupendous miracle indicated to his mind the nearness of him who is the "Thrice Holy One," and under the overwhelming impression of a present God he gave utterance to that

which was the first and deepest emotion of his heart. Nearness to God must be humbling to sinful man.

It is in the presence of God that the splendor of human wisdom dims and grows pale; and it is in such presence that the radiance of infinite holiness deepens all the shades of conscious sin. Never does the stain of crime appear so deep in its dye, so heinous in its demerit, as when it is seen in the light of that God who has told the wicked one of the most awful things in the Bible—that he will “set their secret sins in the light of his countenance.”

When the sinner looks at sin now, it may appear insignificant; but when seen in the intense light of God, its stain will have a heinousness so real and so deep, that we shall see it as Scripture language describes it.

Look at sin in the light of the law, and it is exceeding sinful. Look at sin in the light of God the Legislator, it is yet more sinful; but look at it in the light of the countenance of Jesus, and it not only seems to be the deepest stain, but to be charged with the intensest baseness and ingratitude to the Benefactor.

If such trembling laid hold upon good men

when God appeared to them in his glory, what will seize him who has rejected his mercy when He shall appear in terrible majesty? Will he not cry, "This is Jesus Christ, the Saviour of whom I read, of whom I heard? This is the Christ crucified whom my pastor preached. This is He who I knew would come with clouds. These are the angels, and there is the flaming fire. Mountains and rocks, fall on me, and hide me from the wrath of the Lamb!" Every man that lives shall be there, and in that awful volume which lies before the Judge is registered indelibly every sin each one has committed during his sojourn on the earth. You may have been accustomed to compare yourself with others, and because you thought you were at least as good as some of your neighbors, you may have hoped for acceptance; but can your hope endure before that Eye, the slightest glance of which is piercing with omniscience? Do you feel that you could conceal any thing, when the universe is lit up with the brightness of the countenance of the Judge? You may have imagined that God would not make good his threatenings, that he would be more compassionate than his word has announced; but where is that ima-

gination now? Does it hold good amid this tremendous heraldry of wrath? As you look upon the Judge, and see upon him the marks of wounds inflicted because of God's utter determination to punish sin, do you feel there is a likelihood of God's word being broken, that you may be delivered? Surely not.

If you were before the throne; if the glory, the burning glory of the Judge encompassed you; if the ten thousand times ten thousand ministering spirits that shall attend the Son of man were glancing to and fro, ready not only to gather the wheat into the garner, but to bind the tares in bundles for the burning, you would feel at once all hypocrisy exposed, all false confidence overthrown, and like Esau, you would cry with an exceeding bitter cry, "Woe is me, for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King the Lord of glory."

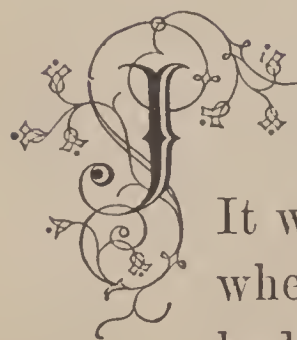
Oh, if you would escape the terror of that hour, you must fly to the Saviour now. He is the only shelter from the storm, and the only covert from the tempest; and in him on that day "you can lift up your head with joy, knowing that your redemption draweth nigh."

MATT. 17:7: "And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid."

XX.

THE TOUCH AND WORDS OF JESUS.

“O Lord, our languid souls inspire,
For here, we trust, thou art ;
Kindle a flame of heavenly fire
In every waiting heart.”

ESUS has ever shown himself a merciful and faithful High-priest. It was thus he came to the disciples when they were terror-stricken, and had fallen on their faces at the sound of Jehovah's words. Jesus came, and with his own almighty finger touched them, and said, “Arise, be not afraid.” As a wise Master-Builder, he comes to his own, walks amid the ruins of poor fallen humanity, and from the fragments erects a magnificent temple to the Lord. He approaches as a skilful workman, and from the clay trodden under foot he forms vessels of honor fit for the Master's use. The Sun of righteousness arises with healing in his wings, and the disorders of humanity

are rectified, its sorrows flee away, and hope everywhere smiles around.

“*Jesus came and touched them;*” and at his touch new vigor was imparted to their frames, new light dawned upon their understandings, and new feelings took possession of their hearts.

A touch of Jesus is the only means of spiritual restoration. This touch is the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart and mind, producing peace, humility, holiness, love, self-denial, and activity to rise and labor for Jesus, for the glory of God, and for the good of man.

“’Tis thine, eternal Spirit, thine,
To form the heart anew :
’Tis thine the passions to recall,
And bid them upward rise,
To make the scales of error fall
From reason’s darkened eyes.”

We may be immersed in sorrow, or sleeping in vain security, or even dead in sin, but Jesus extends his gracious hand to our relief. Omnipotence attends his touch, and the sins of our infirmities, or the sins of our carnal security, or the deeper iniquity of our nature pass away, and we awake as men who have dreamed.

One gracious truth let us ever remember, that to every sinner conscious of his guilt, feeling his readiness to perish, and stretching out his hand for help, *Jesus is ever near*. These disciples experienced this. They were prostrate and abased in the presence of this glorious revelation that was made to them; but Jesus comes and touches them in their humiliation and self-abasement, and says, "Arise, be not afraid."

There is restorative power in his touch and word. It lifts them up and imparts strength to them. It brings precisely what they need—peace, comfort, strength. We cannot rise from our prostrate helplessness and fear on account of sin, until Jesus comes as our Saviour and Friend. Struck down under a sense of sin, we do not arise and go to Jesus. He comes and touches us, and makes himself one with us. We do not go for help. Help comes to us. So near is Jesus, and so infinitely gracious. We do not find him till he finds us. He came to seek the lost. He came to call sinners, and he receiveth them and enters into most friendly fellowship with them. When the Spirit has revealed to us the Divine majesty and holiness, and

when we are thus self-emptied, without strength, prostrate in the dust, Christ comes forth, and touches us. This is the only way in which we are found. Many have sought Jesus long years in vain, groping their way to find salvation, but their search has been fruitless. Worn out, exhausted, all resources and methods tried for naught, they sit down in conscious helplessness, almost in despair; and then, when prostrate with their faces on the ground, Jesus has touched them, dispelled their fear, and made darkness light before them.

It is often our confidence in our own capacity to do something that in some way will make salvation our own, that lies between us and Christ. That being removed, and we brought to feel like Peter when he was sinking, then Christ proves his nearness and his readiness to save, and he lifts the helpless, guilty soul from the fearful pit and from the miry clay. True, we are to seek Christ and take heaven by violence; but this seeking and knocking is to teach us more and more of our helplessness, and to show us more of our sin, and to bring us, by the Spirit's own operation upon our hearts, where Christ will touch us and

• speak comfortably unto us. Oh, it is a blessed thing to have such a Mediator as we poor, sinful children of men have! It is a blessed thing to know that our guilt has been borne by One who was able to bear it, and that through him God has become our Father and our Friend. This comforted the disciples; and although they were "sore afraid," when they heard Jesus say, "Arise, be not afraid," they ventured to lift up their eyes. It was a gentle and well-known voice which sounded in their ears. They had often heard its accents in tones of meekness and of surpassing goodness, and though they had hid their face from the majesty of God, at the voice of the God-man they were encouraged.

But the gracious word of Jesus must be accompanied by the hand of his power, if it is to redress our grievances and rectify whatever is amiss in us. One touch from heaven brings us on our knees, as suppliants begging for mercy, pardon, life. One touch from heaven sets us on our feet, standing on the Rock of ages, firm as the throne of God. One touch from heaven opens our lips, unlooses the string of our tongue, and makes us eloquent in the praise of God. One touch from heaven

makes us strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, and sends us forth on our way rejoicing. Oh for one touch from the hand of Jesus! That one touch would put life in the dead, comfort in the sorrowing, courage in the fearful, and make every tongue celebrate his praise.

Is it not also a blessed thought, that *the Saviour delights in comforting his people on earth*, as well as saving them and bringing them to heaven? His heart is full of tenderness towards them, and it is his pleasure to say to them, as he did to the penitent trembling one at his feet, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace." It rejoices his heart to say to disciples who are anxious lest their faith may fail, and their feet slide from the path that leads to glory, "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." "Let not your heart be troubled." "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you." Though that blessed Saviour is bodily absent from his people on earth, yet he often comforts them in the ordinances of the gospel. He revives them with the sweet promises of his grace, and by speak-

ing to them by his Spirit, he conveys peace and comfort to their hearts.

He comforts and supports them *under apprehensions of temporal calamities*. Impending dangers and distresses often excite terror, and overwhelm the soul with anxious dread. But what ground of fear can they have who have the eternal God for their refuge? What injury can arise to him whose soul is in the Redeemer's hands, and for whose benefit all things are ordered? Not a hair can perish but by special permission from his best Friend. Thousands may fall beside him, and ten thousand at his right hand, but no weapon that is formed against him can prosper. If his eyes were opened to behold his real situation, he might see himself encompassed with horses of fire and chariots of fire; and standing as in an impregnable fortress, he might defy the assaults of men and devils. If his God and Saviour are for him, no matter who may be against him.

The words of Jesus, "Fear not," are well calculated to *dissipate the fears of the kneeling penitent, harassed with the thought of eternal condemnation*. No man can reflect on his own character without feeling that he deserves the wrath of God; and every one that is sensible

of his own demerits must tremble lest the judgments he has deserved should be inflicted. Yet a proper view of the Saviour should dispel his fears, and cause him to rejoice with joy unspeakable.

Does his guilt appear too great to be forgiven? He that offered atonement for it is the infinite God. Do doubts arise respecting his acceptance with the Father? Behold, that very Jesus who made the atonement for him "ever liveth" to plead it as his advocate, and to present it before the mercy-seat. Do death and hell appall him with their terrors? They are altogether subject to the control of Jesus, whose power and faithfulness are pledged for the salvation of all his ransomed people. To the *weakest* then, it may be said, "Fear not; though thou art a worm, thou shalt thresh the mountains; and though thou art the smallest grain that has been gathered from the field, thou shalt be treasured safely in the granary of thy heavenly Father."

But to those who are ignorant of Christ and careless about his salvation, we must not write, "Fear not," but rather, "*Fear and tremble*;" for He whom you are despising is the eternal God, and ever liveth to make his

enemies his footstool. He has only, as it were, to turn the key of the invisible world, and your souls will be locked up in the prison-house whence there is no redemption.

If you prostrate yourself not now at the feet of Jesus, while his offers of mercy are extended to you, you shall perish. Oh, it is not for *you* to be indifferent, where devils tremble, where angels wonder, where prophets and apostles adore, where all the sanctified on earth and all the glorified in heaven derive their chief delight. Look on Him whom your sins have crucified afresh, and mourn. Go to Calvary and see him bleeding there for sin, and will not your heart melt at the sight, and your stubbornness be broken up, and you give yourself a willing captive at the feet of Jesus, saying:

“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On thy kind arms I fall;
Be thou my strength and righteousness,
My Saviour, and my all?”

However feeble the hand of your faith, only put it into the hand of Christ, and you have his promise *that he will not let you go*. Only put yourself under his care as the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep, and he will become security for your safety to

the end. Only give yourself to him, and in return he will give himself to you, and the union thus formed will outlast that of the soul and body. It will exist for ever.

“The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
He will not, he cannot forsake to his foes ;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
He'll never—no, never—no, never forsake.”

MATT. 17 : 8 : "And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only."


MARK 9 : 8 : "And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves."

LUKE 9 : 36 : "And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone."

XXI.

“JESUS ONLY.”

“Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow thee!
Naked, poor, despised, forsaken,
Thou from hence my all shalt be.”

 HERE is another experience of the disciples on the holy mount. When the brightness of the vision had departed, and the voice from the excellent glory had been heard, the disciples fell on their faces and were sore afraid; but at the touch and words of Jesus their fears were dispelled, they dared again to lift up their eyes, and when they looked around they “saw no man, save Jesus only.”

All was gone—Moses, Elias, the cloud, the voice, the radiant Majesty. There cannot be a long continuance of glory upon the earth. Constant happiness can only be looked for and enjoyed in those regions where we shall behold our Saviour in his unchangeable glory, and where the light shall never be clouded. Yes,

yes, Moses and Elias are gone. The glory of the law and of the prophets was but temporary. It endured but for a moment, that the bringing in of a better hope might be more conspicuous and more perfect. The lawgiver and the prophet came to bear testimony to the Messiah, and when that was done they vanished. The disciples therefore need not sorrow at the departure of their heavenly visitants, as long as their Master is yet with them. If He had gone away, the continued presence of Moses and Elias would have afforded them little comfort, for no creature can supply the place of the Saviour. But it matters little who is away, as long as he is at our right hand to help and to defend us. He alone is all-sufficient. With him we can lack nothing. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for *thou* art with me."

"*Jesus*," says another evangelist, "*was found alone.*" And in his church and among his people he must always stand alone: "The Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last." If his church would grow strong; if we would have religion revive; if we would have souls saved, that which we require is, to have *Jesus*

lifted up. Christ is the life of the gospel, and the only life of souls. He is the Day's-man that can alone lay his hand upon the offended God and the offending creature. Our eyes should see Him only, and God's eyes will see him only. The words and the touch of Jesus can turn all hearts to him, and direct all eyes to him. And oh, what a blessed and life-giving sight to see Jesus alone, to feel his sustaining and reinvigorating power, to have our eye fastened upon him and filled with the vision of the Lamb of God, to be so near him and so quickened by him. This we should seek as the resting-place and the consummation of all our hope.

Behold, then, the Lamb of God! This is the Divine invitation and command. He has been lifted up on the cross that he might draw all men unto him. Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, urges Christians in their race to keep the eye fixed only on Jesus. These Christian racers are not to see any man in the multitudes of spectators witnessing the race, nor are they to be attracted by anything, however precious or beautiful, by their side. They must see no man, save Jesus only. Those who run in the race to heaven, must

believe only in Jesus, love only Jesus, obey only Jesus, hope only in Jesus.

Believers in Jesus, have you looked to him enough? Have not your eyes often wandered away? You have looked to yourselves, to the world, to many inferior objects, and have been absorbed in many inferior cares; but Jesus, "the author and finisher of your faith," who should be to you "all in all," has had a very inadequate and imperfect portion of your regard. Just in proportion as you have looked away from him, has your spiritual prosperity been hindered; and in like proportion as you keep your eyes fixed on him, has your spiritual prosperity increased, become redolent and grateful. Oh, then, in the performance of duty, in the endurance of sorrow, in the conflict with temptation, in the prospect of life, and in the anticipation of death, look to him, and see only him as a Saviour. Seeing none but Jesus only, will save you from many snares, will guide you in many perplexities, and Jesus will reward you by returning in mighty and benignant influence all you can desire.

There may be some who have hitherto seen every thing around and above them but Jesus,

and who *have cast no glance of faith and love to him*. Let me entreat such to endeavor to fix their gaze upon him now. So long as you are looking away from him, you are in danger ; and if you desire to receive impulses by which you shall rise from depravity, and receive peace and joy, you must look to him now. Look to him in penitence and in faith, and you shall live. But remember there is a time coming, as we have intimated, when you shall be permitted to look no longer. He will withdraw himself from the guilty and the obdurate ; and when he shall appear to them again, it will be in the fearful and overwhelming majesty of the judgment-seat, when it will be too late to obtain mercy, and when nothing shall remain but “a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.” Then Jesus, with an eye of pure light and fire, will penetrate to the most shrouded secret of your soul. He will detect your impenitence and unbelief, and will pronounce that sentence which will be the knell of your everlasting perdition. By the solemnity of that dreadful day, and by the fear of enduring on that day “the wrath of the Lamb,” we implore you to come to him, as he has commanded. Turn away from every thing

else, and behold him as your own Saviour. In meditation, in faith, in love, in hope, look to him now, and at last you shall see the King in his beauty, you shall gaze upon his appearing, his name shall be upon your forehead, and you shall reign and be glorified with him for ever and ever.

When the disciples "lifted up their eyes and saw no man save Jesus only," they felt that they must now *descend from that mountain height and mingle again with the world*. They must go down to the plain crowded with sinners, with the profane, the vicious, the rebellious; but this was their comfort, that they would have the Lord Jesus with them. We, too, have the same blessed Companion of our heavenly journey. We do not now see his glory as they saw it, nor have we now the vision of the glory of the Father; but we know that the Lord Jesus Christ, glorified on that mountain summit, now reigns in glory, and is watching each of us, and has promised to guide every believer in him to everlasting life.

Having this gracious Companion of our pilgrimage, let us honor and trust him, and keep close to his side. If the world neglects

him, we must be more zealous in his service, and we “shall see him” hereafter as he is, surrounded with a glory surpassing even that which he assumed on Tabor. We shall see him on the heights of the heavenly Zion, with a countenance surpassing the sun, with garments glittering as the light, with hosts of radiant saints around him, and with the glory of the Father shedding its purity over the whole of that heavenly land. Then our joy will be consummated, and the hour of our last and eternal triumph come.

Seeing, then, none but Him, let us press onward to the kingdom, hasting through the wilderness, living by faith, and not by sight.

Seeing none but Him, let our joy and peace abound, living like strangers here, glorying in tribulation, reaching forward to the prize, anticipating the crown and the kingdom.

Seeing none but Him, let us pass the time of our sojourning here in fear, girding our loins, trimming our lamps, as we hear his own voice saying, “Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me to give to every man according as his work shall be.”

MATTHEW 17:9: "And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead."

MARK 9:9: "And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead."

LUKE 9:36, 37: "And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen. And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met him."



XXII.

DOWN THE MOUNTAIN, AND THE SOLEMN CHARGE.

“Glory, glory to our King!
Crowns unfading wreath his head;
Jesus is the name we sing,
Jesus risen from the dead;
Jesus, spoiler of the grave,
Jesus, mighty now to save.”



ALL that transpired on that holy mount is now past. The whole vision, with all its attendant circumstances, is as a dream of the night.

The night, too, on which it occurred is over; “the next day” has arrived, and Christ and his three disciples are, as Luke tells us, descending the mountain. Each individual of that little company is engrossed with all that has so recently passed away, and Christ now delivers to them his solemn charge respecting the vision. They were to “tell the vision to no man, till the Son of man be risen again from the dead.”

The Saviour, in all his sayings and doings

among men, was manifestly *as prudent as he was good*. We find him once and again indicating to his disciples the expediency of silence on certain questions and events for a specified time. In the twentieth verse of the eighth chapter of Luke, he charges the disciples that they should tell no man that he was the Christ; and in his last discourse he distinctly says, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." When he was sending his disciples to prepare his coming among the men of Judea, he instructs to whom they were to announce the gospel of peace. They were not to "cast their pearls before swine;" in other words, they were not to present his truths to men of certain mental and moral habits. They were to be "wise as serpents" while they were "harmless as doves." The mind must be prepared for the reception of truth, or it may spurn the very knowledge which it would otherwise gladly embrace. In teaching humanity, God therefore deals out truth as men are able to receive it. Even the great facts of nature have thus been very gradually made known to men. The great book of science, "written within and on the backside, and sealed with seven seals," is not

laid open at once to nature's inquiring pupil. Only one seal at a time is broken; and when the contents of the unfolded document have been deciphered, word for word, and partially understood, which it may take centuries to do, then, and not till then, another seal is broken. God's course in the development of his treasures of knowledge, is like that of the sun, not pouring at once a full flood of light upon the world, but shining brighter and brighter until the perfect day. Bacon and Newton and Harvey and Watt and Morse came on the scene many years apart, to unfold, under God's guidance, the true way to investigate nature, and to show what sublime and wonderful things nature had in store for the children of men.

The same prudential order can be still more clearly observed *in the revelation of spiritual things*. Four thousand long years were occupied in preparing the world for the reception of Christ. The promise of a Saviour made to Adam was very feeble compared with that which was made to Isaiah. The one was like the glimmering of a distant star, compared to the flush of the approaching sun. Adam, Noah, Moses, David, Isaiah, Daniel, Malachi,


were all necessary at distant intervals for developing the religious intellect of the world.

It is only gradually and slowly that man can obtain knowledge. Drop by drop only must descend into the vessel with such a small receiving capacity. The alphabet must be mastered before we can read. The first principles must be acquired before we advance into the science. God does not treat man as an angel, but as a fallen creature, with powers only in the infancy of their being, and capable of gradual expansion. Here then was one principle which guided the Saviour on the present occasion in charging his disciples that they should "tell the vision to no man."

But *he had other reasons for his prohibition of the publication of his transfiguration.* One of these was, that unless the transfiguration was received as *a proof of his Messiahship*, it would answer no practical purpose among men. The past conduct of the scribes and Pharisees, and of the people over whom they had such power, made it evident that if the disciples were to proclaim what they had seen and heard on the mountain the previous night, instead of accepting the statement in good faith, and taking it as a proof of Christ's Mes-

siahship, they would turn it into scorn and ridicule. There are some people so narrow-minded, and whose understandings are so warped by prejudice, that when they once imbibe a dislike for another, they can see no good either in the individual himself or what is done by him. Unworthy motives are attributed to every thing he says or does. If such a one is engaged in a good cause, instead of aiding him or the cause, they throw stumbling-blocks in his way. To seek to please such would be a fruitless effort. They are determined not to be pleased; and instead of receiving good themselves, they are only receiving evil, and are the occasion of evil to others. They would not accept as genuine the most convincing proof of the rectitude of the person's character, nor be satisfied with any thing that might emanate from him. Evil then, rather than good, would come out of any attempt to please them, or work in them a change of mind. For this cause Jesus, after he had enjoyed the most refreshing season with heavenly ones on that holy mount, charged his disciples, "Tell the vision to no man."

But the injunction of silence was only to last for a limited period—"Till the Son of man



be risen again from the dead." After his resurrection from the dead the transfiguration, received in connection with the whole of his marvellous life, would come with well-nigh irresistible proof in favor of his Messiahship. In the light of the crowning fact of his resurrection, all the facts of his previous life, even the most apparently trivial, would start up as incontrovertible evidence, and "declare him to be the Son of God with power." Each fact of his life, viewed separately, might be quibbled about and sophistically argued away; but link them together, and join them to his resurrection, and they become, as evidence, irresistible. His resurrection was a sun-fact, which lighted up the whole of his previous life with the rays of Divinity. Hence when Peter proclaimed it upon the day of Pentecost, thousands, who before regarded Him as an impostor and blasphemer, bowed with penitent reverence to him as the mighty Son of God.

The Saviour did nothing for ostentation. "Tell the vision to no man." It was prophesied of him that he should not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets. He would carry on his work in silence. He would blow no trumpet before him, nor would

he have any noisy retinue to follow him. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." Jesus went about his work quietly, but perseveringly, leaving his works to testify of him, and permitting no noisy words of his to attract the attention of men. On this principle too, he enjoined his disciples not to make known to any the glory they had seen, and the honor that had been conferred upon him while on that holy mount.

How different Christ's procedure from that which sometimes characterizes his professed followers. There are those who cannot do any thing to ameliorate the condition of their fellow-men or to advance the cause of the Master without sounding a trumpet and standing at the corners of the streets. When they contribute to the cause of God or to the relief of the suffering, they proclaim their alms before men. And there are those who cannot speak for Jesus or work for Jesus, whether among rich or poor, young or old, without proclaiming their own goodness. It was not so with Jesus. He would not let his left hand know what his right hand performed. "Tell the vision to no man." There is a time to speak, but there is also a time to be silent.

“Tell the vision to no man.” In this way *the unbelief of the Jews was punished*. They had evidence sufficient already of his Messiahship, but they had closed their eyes to its sufficiency, and had attributed the working of his miracles to the agency of the evil one; and because of this, the Saviour would not spread before them clearer demonstrations by which they might possibly be convinced.

Jesus will not press his claims upon those who *will not* come to him that they might have life. He will afford them all reasonable motives to induce them to believe; but if these avail not, he will suspend his operations and withhold his grace. He did this with Pharaoh. He would not let go his grasp on Israel, though hail and darkness and murrain and blood had befallen his land. His heart, at each succeeding miracle, became harder than before. God withheld his grace, because the evidence which had already been afforded of his might had been resisted; and to punish him for his sin, he was left to himself. So with Jesus on this occasion. The Jews were to have no such testimony as the vision afforded. “To him that hath,” and improves what God has given him, “shall be given”—more grace

and more proofs of God's goodness ; " but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have."

"Tell the vision to no man." Thus *the full accomplishment of the Saviour's work was allowed*. "Had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." If such proof of the Messiahship of Jesus had been spread before them as the transfiguration scene afforded, the Jewish rulers and the Jewish people might have been compelled by the irresistible force of the evidence to believe on him ; and if they had believed on him, he would not have been betrayed into their hands, nor condemned by Pilate, nor crucified on Calvary. All would have withheld their impious hands, and the work of our redemption would not have been accomplished.

Ungodly men work out their own evil designs, and yet they are instrumental in the carrying forth of God's merciful purposes. Men act as they do, because they are blind or heedless ; and yet because they thus act, the salvation of God's people is perfected. Well might Paul, while meditating on a kindred subject, exclaim, " Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God !

How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

"Tell the vision to no man." Thus the Saviour taught his disciples *to restrain themselves*, and *to wait the Lord's time*. It is much easier sometimes to speak than to keep silence. We are so excited by the occasion, so rejoiced at the loving-kindness of God to ourselves or at the success of his cause around us, or so anxious about the salvation of the souls of others, that we feel almost under constraint to speak; or, on the other hand, when we hear the religion of Jesus maligned, or slanderous statements made respecting some one who we know is not deserving of such calumny, or some one is boasting of his own doings for the purpose of disparaging others and injuring their influence for good, our very blood boils when listening; but it is not the time to speak; it would be wasting words; it would be only giving an occasion to the adversary to sin more. We must wait and suffer and pray and labor, assured that concerning such things,

"God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain."

“Tell the vision to no man. Thus all *vaunting on the part of the disciples was prevented*. These three disciples made more rapid progress in divine knowledge than the rest. They were able to apprehend more of the mystery of godliness, more of the incarnation, more of the work and glory of Christ; and there was danger, as they had received greater privileges, of boasting of their superior advantages. Jesus would save his favored disciples from this sin, and he would save others from the irritation which such boasting would naturally stir up in their minds. Jesus is too kind to permit any of his disciples not so privileged as others to be gloried over in this manner. Their relation of the wondrous scene would doubtless have not only excited envy in the breasts of the other disciples, but it would probably have tended in some measure to pander to their carnal hopes of a temporal kingdom and to the glory that awaited them as the followers of One who was to be King of the Jews. When Paul had been exalted to the third heaven, lest he should be exalted above measure, there was given him a thorn in the flesh to buffet him. Silence no doubt was imposed upon the disciples for the same

purpose. Silence to some even of God's children would, under such circumstances, be a grievous thorn.

"Tell the vision to no man." Are we not taught by this solemn charge of Jesus that *Christians should jealously watch over their Christian experiences, and not lightly divulge them?* Even to his fellow-disciples the disciple of Jesus cannot relate all which the Saviour has often permitted him to taste. Some Christian people are perpetually moved with a notion that they must testify to whatever manifestation of God is granted to themselves at the risk of bringing shallowness and weakness upon their own experience. But in one form or other, this reserve and silence which Jesus imposed upon his three disciples are imposed upon all who have been admitted into the mysteries of salvation, and have been brought near to the inaccessible glory. We must ponder these things for a season in our hearts, till the soul has fully made them her own, and only speak when we have come definitely to know. There is a reverence which becomes us when we stand looking out into the Infinite and Eternal. The time will doubtless come to speak; but first there is a time

to meditate, lest we desecrate and degrade that knowledge which is too high for us. We must expect, too, the shadow of these infinite things to rest more or less upon us, till we have been raised from the dead; and then we shall know even as we are known. The day was not far distant from the disciples of the Lord, when Christ's rising from the dead should take off all restraints, when the chosen witnesses of the transfiguration should no longer be obliged to conceal the heavenly vision, when they should be at full liberty to confirm the faith of the church by recounting this prelude to Immanuel's glory.

In fine, as these disciples came down from the mount, let us reflect *how diversified are the states of God's people upon earth!* Though these three disciples were exalted to the very heavens in point of privilege, they had to descend into the valley again, and go through much tribulation on their way to the kingdom. Thus it is with all the people of God. Their life here is at best a checkered scene. Joy is quickly followed by sorrow. If we are sometimes favored with special manifestations of divine mercy and grace, glimpses and pledges of future glory, yet they are never of long

continuance. They are soon withdrawn. "Two heavens are too much for those to expect who never deserve one." We must come down from the mount where we have had communion with God, where we have enjoyed unspeakable delight, and of which we have been saying, "It is good to be here ;" for even there "we have no continuing city."

Blessed be God, there is a mountain of glory and joy before us, whence we shall never come down ; and when we have reached that mountain, we may say with emphasis, "It is good to be here." We shall need no tabernacle, for we shall dwell in the temple of God, and shall go no more out for ever. We shall need no tables spread for refreshment, as we often require here ; for we shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of our Father, and be satisfied with the goodness of his house, even of his holy place. "Blessed are they who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb."

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